

# AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN RELIGION

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH I have written this book as a small contribution to a discussion fascinating to both philosopher and theologian, I hope that the general reader may also find in it a clue to the solution of the problem of why religion should appear to be somehow hostile to the beauties of sense, and yet, to the extent that it in the least neglects them, irrelevant to life and therefore dead.

In denying initial majuscules to certain nouns and pronouns referring to God, I have followed, after the example of some modern scholars, the practice of the English Bible.

Acknowledgment of sources is made as far as possible in the footnotes; but there are some authors to whom I owe a debt not so easily redeemed. I would specially mention Mr. E. F. Carritt and Dom Cuthbert Butler.

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GEDDES MACGREGOR

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## INTRODUCTION

PEOPLE who are attracted by the beauties of sense on the one hand and the mystery of God on the other are inevitably confronted with a tantalizing situation. For it is evident that between the two experiences there is both an immense gulf and a remarkable similarity. The more cultivated people become by reason of both aesthetic and religious experience, the wider the gulf appears, and yet the closer the similarity. But philosophy has not been very successful in finding them a solution to their problem. Indeed, the immaturity of aesthetics and the wise caution of theology have for long conspired together to discourage the attempt. But circumstances have changed. The field is now open even though it is no less thorny.

The nearer men try to approach to heaven, the nearer they find themselves to earth. Men have met this fascinating yet disconcerting predicament in various ways. Some, wantonly eager to break down the barrier between Spirit and Sense and draw them together in broad daylight, have tried to lure Spirit down from the thin, rarefied air of heaven. Others have tried, for the same reason, to drag Sense up from the warm, red earth to the cool, celestial domain of the Spirit. But these clumsy match-makers who have wanted to marry Spirit and Sense have been invariably disappointed. Far from effecting the union that seemed to them so natural and desirable, they have found that, while believing themselves to have carried off God from heaven, they had succeeded in capturing for Sense only a cold, weird vapour, very different from that Spirit they desired her to wed. Moreover, Sense was not in the least attracted by their choice : on the contrary, she raged and sulked by turns. And those who tried to carry her off to heaven to be married there fared even worse ; for not only could they no longer find the bridegroom, but Sense also had mischievously slipped from their chariot and now jeered at them from the earth below. Most dismal of all, however, is the fate of those who, seeing the hopelessness of a ready match, try, nevertheless, to keep them apart and visit them by turn ; for they not only

soon lose them both, but also find themselves seriously committed to a caricature of each.

Both attempts at easy union and at rigid dichotomy are bound to fail just because of the paradox to which we have referred, that between Spirit and Sense there is a gulf and a similarity. The true relationship must be one that is very nicely poised, and not easy to ascertain. We believe, however, that it is one of the main problems of civilized society to ascertain it. It is our task to make a contribution, however small, towards that end.

From the beginning of the present century there has been rapid and immense development in the philosophy of beauty which makes an undertaking such as ours more practicable than it has ever been before. Religion, on the other hand, is a very different question. Its scope is enormous. Not many people would be ready to describe the present age as a religious one; but it is open to dispute whether such a designation is meaningful in respect of any age. What is certainly true is that the present age is conspicuously uncomfortable, on the whole, in relating its life to traditional elements in religion. But those of us, for example, who believe in the eternal value of certain traditional elements in Christianity, deem it the responsibility of theologians to express them as adequately as they can in terms of contemporary life and culture.

One might spend all one's life investigating a problem such as this in the context of the whole field of religion, and be little nearer a solution. A barrister once provided the court with a long list of reasons why his client's witness could not appear; and then it transpired that the last reason was that he was dead. This may have been a useful expedient for gaining time, but it is most certainly what must be avoided at all costs in a task such as ours. We must look at the evidence most likely to damn our case. If we find there that our case is supported, we may treat more favourable evidence with a lighter heart. It would be easy to show how intimate is the connection between aesthetic experience and religion in certain selected fields of inquiry — intimate to a degree that would make them seem practically to coincide. And it would be just as easy, by choosing other fields of inquiry, to demonstrate how seemingly quite irreconcilable is the aesthetic to the religious

attitude. We ought, therefore, to look at a case in which both the similarity and the dissimilarity are strikingly apparent. In Catholic mysticism we find just such a case, arising as spontaneously within a rigorous ecclesiastical tradition as poetry has so often arisen within the framework of a closely conventional social system. The Catholic mystic unceasingly stresses the detachment from the things of sense that is necessary for all who would ascend Mount Carmel ; but it is a detachment very different from that recommended by some of his distantly oriental counterparts. He is certainly no airy theorist, but above all a practician, who has succeeded, we believe, in capturing both Sense and Spirit by keeping his proper distance from them both. For they are both elusive in their very different ways ; and if the one is aloof and transcendent, the other is shy and delicate, like the modest mimosa, which droops and folds itself at man's touch. Sensuous man, snatching so clumsily at beauty, complains that

pleasures are like poppies spread—  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed ;  
Or like the snow falls in the river—  
A moment white, then melts for ever ;

but beauty, like the Word of the Lord, *endureth* for ever.

It will never  
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Sense as well as Spirit can reveal the eternal, and those of us who are Christians believe that through the mystery of the Incarnation God uniquely shows us that it is so.

One of the most seemingly obvious and yet very dangerous pitfalls in procedure, in an inquiry such as ours, is that of trying to cope with the problem before one has in fact fully isolated what, precisely, aesthetic experience is. So intricate and essential is this question that we shall devote half our space to it almost without raising the problem of religion at all. In the second half of our work we shall then be able to use our findings, in the field of religion. Otherwise, we should be intolerably confused, were it only by the ambiguities in terms such as " art " and " aesthetic experience ". These will confront us, indeed, no matter what precautions we take,

but they will much less readily mislead us in the later and crucial moments of our inquiry, if we have thoroughly clarified our minds about them in the first place. The term "art", for example, means, according to the schoolmen, one of the most practical of practical activities,<sup>1</sup> while in the usage of Signor Croce, to whose aesthetic we owe more than to any other, it means the most theoretical of theoretical activities. It is plain that we need not talk about our main problem until we have settled what it is that we have to talk about. Writers have not always done this: otherwise, what we have just been saying would be as much a platitude as it sounds.

The goal of religion must always be some kind of vital union with the divine. But if this is the *terminus ad quem* of religion, what is its *terminus a quo*? We take the view, now to be investigated, that it lies in aesthetic experience, which, following Croce, we regard as the groundwork of all experience, and an independent mode of it. But so distorted is our human mind and will that it is almost as difficult for us to get back to the genuine *terminus a quo* as it is to get forward to the *terminus ad quem*. Yet we must get back if we would go forward: we must become as little children if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. If we would consider God, we must consider the lilies. It is the teaching of the Church that God shows us how it is done. Our task will be to investigate the situation in terms of philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> At least, from one point of view: *in ratione virtutis* it lies rather, according to Thomas, on the intellectual side. For Thomas divides the practical order into two spheres, action and making (*agibile*, *πρακτόν*; and *factibile*, *ποιητόν*, respectively), so that art which is "making" may be considered, from this point of view, a *scientia practica*. It is this idea that underlies remarks such as that of Gino Severini, in *Du cubisme au classicisme*, that art is merely humanized science, or that of D. F. Fumet, in Stanislas Fumet's *Le Procès de l'art*, that it is a mathematics of the heart. In a novel study, with special reference to Leonardo da Vinci, *Art and Scientific Thought* (Faber, 1944), Dr. Martin Johnson considers impulses common to the aims of art and the work of modern physical science.



# PART ONE

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN AESTHETICS

#### § 1. *The Problem of Beauty*

THAT it is impossible to evaluate the results of contemporary thought in any field without reference to the antecedent process of development is widely admitted. This necessity of looking back before taking up one's stand has peculiar force in the case of a discipline such as aesthetics, which has but recently succeeded in extricating itself from the rest of philosophy, and in whose very name ambiguity still resides.

To anyone placing himself at the threshold of the eighteenth century, and surveying on the one hand the venerable traditions of rigorous thought in Europe and on the other the mellow riches of her vast treasure-stores of art, it must appear remarkable that a continent which had loved beauty so well and had thought so much about the nature of things should have thought so little about beauty as to have failed till then to evolve a special means of discussing its nature. Philosophers had not infrequently referred to the problem of beauty, which certainly puzzled the best of them; but they had evidently regarded it either as not important enough to merit special treatment, or as involving too hazardous an enterprise for philosophy to undertake upon an independent course.

There is also another and not less relevant consideration which demands that aesthetics be viewed, even more than some other branches of philosophy, in the setting of its development. A science which has achieved independence by means of so long a struggle is peculiarly susceptible to the general philosophical influences surrounding its birth. To understand clearly what is meant by aesthetic experience, and sustain the claims of a particular standpoint, it is necessary to share in some measure the travail that brought forth this science. But we survey its development not only to appreciate

the thrust of the argument that we intend to put forward in the ensuing chapters of the present work, but also that we may be aware of its limitations.

With these ends in view, we sketch, in an extremely cursory manner, the process by which and the circumstances in which modern aesthetics emerged.

## § 2. *The Beginnings*

Before the birth of Socrates (c. 470 B.C.) the Greeks were apparently in the habit of inquiring whether a particular work of art was beautiful; but whether before his time they inquired into the nature of beauty we have no evidence. Xenophon reports Aristippus as asking the Socrates of the *Memorabilia*, whether he recognized anything as beautiful.<sup>1</sup> Socrates replied that he did, and that beautiful things might be quite different from one another. A beautiful shield, as an instrument of defence, is necessarily very different from a beautiful javelin, an instrument of speed in attack. Aristippus pointed out that the beautiful then seemed to be in the same case with the good. Socrates freely admitted this, saying that whatever is beautiful is good from the same point of view, namely its use, so that a dung-bag, which is good for its purpose, might be beautiful, while a golden shield, bad for its purpose, might well be ugly.<sup>2</sup> All things are beautiful and good (καλά τε καὶ ἀγαθά) for whatever purpose they serve well, and ugly and bad for whatever purpose they serve badly.<sup>3</sup>

Incipient speculation about the beautiful, as about the good, naturally rested in the metaphysical assumption that art is related to man and his purposes in the same way in which the ordinary objects of perception are related. In general, the Greeks tended to see no distinction between the beautiful and the good. They also persisted, as we shall see presently, even in their most mature thought, in the view that art is fundamentally, if not merely, imitative. Before the time of Plato, the question of an unseen reality behind the objects of ordinary sense-experience had not fully emerged. Art was there-

<sup>1</sup> *Memorabilia*, 3, 8, 4-7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Croce, *Estetica*, c. 14; *infra*, § 25, p. 63 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Memorabilia*, 3, 8, 5.

fore regarded as a convenient shorthand enabling men to approach nature to an extent greater than the limitations of space and time otherwise allowed. It was a second nature, more or less unsatisfactorily copying the original ; but it was a useful practical device for approaching it.

In this background, Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.), eager to get at truth first-hand, was naturally suspicious of art. In opening a new vista by his doctrine of Forms, he was never content with the observation of particular things, but wanted to discover the universal character by which particular things might be properly understood. The beautiful certainly presented itself to him as a serious problem ; but, suspecting art as part of the world of illusion and shadow, he maintained that beauty was of all essences that which we apprehend most clearly through the senses,<sup>1</sup> and therefore most susceptible to being misread by the man who approaches particular things instead of getting behind them to the world of forms. For Plato, the artist is not even an imitator of the true nature of things in their universal character : he imitates particular things which are themselves only a kind of imitation of their inner nature. The work of the artist, thus twice removed from the world of forms, is therefore unlikely to edify or enlighten.<sup>2</sup> Working in a world of shadows, he is an imperfect copyist even of such a world ; and his art is thus the shadow of a shadow. Nevertheless, beauty shines through not only the particular objects of our experience, but even the works of art that imitate them ; and nowhere is this so evident as in the symmetry that delights the mind in objects of art as it does in the objects of ordinary experience. We trace here the beginnings of a theory of formal beauty. For Plato, the poet and tragedian and sculptor are very inferior to the true lover of beauty ; and it has been aptly, if glibly, said that for him art is outside the province of the beautiful. But while he despises art in which the accompanying pleasure seems confused with passion, as in tragedy, he values it to the extent to which it produces the "proper pleasure" of delight in symmetry.<sup>3</sup> It is but rarely, however, that we meet this doctrine of a specific aesthetic pleasure that is wholly good and pure, although such an

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedrus*, 250 C-D.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 597 D—598 D.

<sup>3</sup> *Philebus*, 51 B—52 B.

incipient distinction paved the way for the subsequent development of aesthetic theory. More often we are directed to despise the plain man's attraction to the outward show of beauty, as he finds it in art ; for he must fail to grasp the true character of beauty that is behind such manifestations and belongs to the invisible world of ideas. It is true that beautiful things participate *modo inferiori*, in this absolute beauty ;<sup>1</sup> but unless they succeed in pointing to it, which they cannot do without philosophical reflection, they ensnare men by sustaining their interest in the world of shadows.<sup>2</sup>

The profound philosophical insight of Plato, together with the suspicion of art to which his view of its character as imitative led him, predisposed European thought in such a way as to retard for centuries the progress of aesthetics. But Plato had seen that the moral life demanded struggle and action. Aristotle (c. 384–322 B.C.) was able to proceed from this to the observation that while the good is limited to action, beauty pertains to that which is unmoved.<sup>3</sup> Like Plato, he is still hampered by the persistent assumption of ancient thought that art is simply imitative ;<sup>4</sup> but his critical insight at least considerably damaged the characteristic Greek notion of formal beauty. Moreover, Aristotle appeared at a more favourable time for reflection upon the beautiful ; for by then the greatest works of art not only had been produced, but had more fully permeated Greek civilization. Aristotle both seized this opportunity and made use of his predecessor's reflections. His *Poetics*, although making in some respects an inadequate retort to Plato, attains an insight into the nature of art largely absent from any previous investigation. Conspicuously interesting to modern ears, for example,

<sup>1</sup> *Symposium*, 211 B ; vide 210 E—211 C ; cf. *Gorgias*, 468 A.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the "Form of the Good" of the *Republic* may be identified with the αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν of the *Symposium*. The task of Socrates is to break down the distinction that Polus makes between ἀγαθόν and καλόν and likewise between αἰσχρόν and κακόν.

<sup>3</sup> *Metaphysics*, 13, 3 (1078 a) : τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἕτερον (τὸ μὲν γὰρ αἰεὶ ἐν πράξει, τὸ δὲ καλὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀκινήτοις).

<sup>4</sup> We do not find μίμησις opposed to φαντασία until the time of Philostratus, who supposes that while imitation can create only what it has seen, imagination can as readily create what it has not seen : μίμησις μὲν γὰρ δημιουργήσκει, ὃ εἶδεν, φαντασία δὲ καὶ ὃ μὴ εἶδεν (*Vita Apoll.* 6, 19). (*Infra*, § 3) Aristotle defined φαντασία as κίνησις ὑπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τῆς κατ' ἐνέργειαν γιγνομένης (*De Anima*, 3, 3).

is the Aristotelian dictum that poetry is philosophically more important than history, because it speaks of universals, while history tells of particulars.<sup>1</sup> But it is at best doubtful whether Aristotle meant by this anything such as a modern aesthetician might mean by it ; for that which he valued in drama as opposed to history was its element of generality. He preferred the later and less vigorous comedy of types to the robust Aristophanic comedy, on the ground, it would seem, that the presentation is consciously divorced as far as possible from practical instances. Keenly aware, also, of the educational possibilities of art, he did not fail to see that it had a purpose independent of education ; and in this connection he contrasted what he called the expression of character with what he called the expression of emotion. He pronounced the flute, for example, a more useful instrument for the latter purpose, and to be used, therefore, for achieving purgation (*κάθαρσις*) of emotion rather than education.<sup>2</sup> His famous observation *περὶ καθάρσεως*, destined to provoke much subtle and largely unfruitful interpretation by later writers, is, as far as we can tell from the mutilated condition of the *Poetics*, defective because of his medicinal view of the process and his ready acquiescence in the accepted doctrine of drama as imitation.<sup>3</sup> But he did conceive of a specific and pure joy in imitation, which liberates him from the Platonic contempt for art. "From imitations everyone derives pleasure. Works of art prove this ; for the very things that it pains us to see we enjoy beholding in exact reproductions — for instance, the forms of the most horrible beasts and corpses. The reason is that the pleasantest thing in the world, not only to philosophers, but to the rest of men, is to be learning something."<sup>4</sup> Such passages indicate that Aristotle had seized on the idea that, if art is imitative, it is at any rate imitative of reality, and not, as with Plato, of reality's shadow. Tragedy does not merely narrate deeds, but imitates them, effecting, "by pity and fear", the purgation (*κάθαρσις*) of such emotions.<sup>4</sup> He also observes that one obtains relief from emotions to the extent to which one is affected by them ;<sup>5</sup> and, citing the case of music,

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, 9 (1451 b).<sup>2</sup> *Politics*, 5 (8), 6 (1341 a).<sup>3</sup> *Poetics*, 4 (1448 b).<sup>4</sup> *Poetics*, 6 (1449 b).<sup>5</sup> *Politics*, 5 (8), 7 (1342 a).

in particular religious music, he remarks that one appears to be cleansed or cured of emotion by such means as if by a medicine. The cathartic effects of music seem to follow as naturally as Shakespeare's love-sick duke expected them to follow from a surfeit of music, the "food of love", causing the appetite for love to "sicken and so die".<sup>1</sup>

The conception of formal beauty, however, is the most characteristic legacy of early Greek thought. In the ensuing generations, no mind that had been touched by Plato could view art without misgiving, although, as we trace the fortunes of aesthetic theory among those who inherited this tradition, we shall find that the struggle for a surer footing for art began very soon, while it need hardly be said that art itself, ever gaily independent of a theory of beauty, pursued its own course, providing for each successive generation of philosophers ample opportunity for reflective exercise.

### § 3. *From the Death of Aristotle to Plotinus*

As the Greek city-politics lost importance, and ancient philosophy began to crumble a little with the development of Stoic and Epicurean doctrine, the problems of art and life pressed upon thought from a wider front. The Stoics accepted in general a doctrine of formal beauty, consisting of the dispositions of line and colour. Nevertheless, we find Cicero (106-43 B.C.) informing Marcus Brutus<sup>2</sup> that when Pheidias carved a Zeus or an Athene, he did not study and imitate a model, but worked from his own mind, where there resided an exalted type of beauty needing only the artist's technical skill to translate it into marble. Cicero, although not a philosopher as were the intellectual giants of Greece whom we have been considering, is, as an earnest scholar, accurate observer, and incomparable stylist, a conspicuously trustworthy guide to the trend of post-Aristotelian thought. The travesty of Platonic doctrine here enunciated illustrates how dissatisfied men were becoming in regard to Plato's attitude to art. On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Sc. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Orator*, 2, 9: "ipsius in mente insidebat species pulchritudinis eximia quaedam, quam intuens in eaque defixus ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat".

Cicero freely assumes the Greek view of beauty to have consisted in an apt relation of the parts to a whole.<sup>1</sup> This view seems to have been universally adopted as a starting-point for any reflection on the beautiful. However, although Aristotle, in distinguishing forms of art, had perhaps hinted at different kinds of beauty, Cicero goes so far as to suggest that there is a masculine beauty of dignity and a feminine beauty of grace.<sup>2</sup> Here we may observe the beginning of a breakdown in the theory of formal beauty.

The famous treatise on the sublime (*Περὶ ὕψους*), traditionally attributed to Longinus, but probably the work of an unknown author writing soon after the death of Augustus, marks a very important stage in the development of aesthetic theory. That rhetorical criticism should be making use of the word *ὑψος* is itself indicative of a growing consciousness of the aesthetic problem. Unprofitable as much subsequent discussion of the sublime as a special and mysterious kind of beauty may have been, the author of the *Περὶ ὕψους* undoubtedly laid hold of aesthetic fact in a manner that no writer had till then attained. In selecting the words of "the Jewish lawgiver, no mean writer" to illustrate the type of aesthetic intuition, "Let there be light; and there was light", he secured an invaluable clue to the solution of the problem of beauty.<sup>3</sup> His choice of examples is particularly felicitous: it is by suggestion rather than analysis that he enters the unexplored land of reflection upon aesthetic fact. "Ajax, when Zeus has caused a sudden darkness and great night to descend upon the Greek battle, cries in his dismay, 'O Father Zeus, deliver yet the sons of the Achaians from this darkness; give us day and grant our eyes sight; and if it be that we must die, let us die in the light.'"<sup>4</sup> Above all, he seems to be profoundly aware of the element of mystery and incompleteness in aesthetic fact; and he is quick to distinguish false sublimity, arising from over-elaboration on the one hand and affected frigidity on the other, from the cool reserve and bright suggestiveness which he admires in style. He remarks how we admiringly contemplate the Nile and Danube more than our homely local rivers, and the gulfs of Etna more than our home-fires; for it is the strange and

<sup>1</sup> *De Officiis*, I, 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Περὶ ὕψους*, 9, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Iliad*, 17, 645-647.

unfamiliar that fills us with wonder.<sup>1</sup> Here he appears to grasp in some way the essential element of mental activity that characterizes the aesthetic fact. As De Quincey has pointed out, *ὑψος* was "a comprehensive expression for all qualities which give life or animation to the composition".<sup>2</sup>

In Stoicism we find a growing appreciation of beauty apart from formal design. There is, for example, a reference in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121-180) to the beauty of the little cracks on the surface of a loaf, and of figs that gape with ripeness. We are admonished thus to see the beauty of life as well as "that of imitation", and with chaste eyes admiringly to behold both the appeal of youth and the mellowness of age.<sup>3</sup>

In Philostratus (A.D. 170-245), however, we find the doctrine of imitation definitely attacked, although he still dallies with the traditional view. He makes Apollonius attack the Egyptian representation of gods in the forms of animals.<sup>4</sup> When the Egyptian applies the argument *tu quoque*, referring to the Greek gods, and pointing out that, since art must always imitate something already perceived, they were in the same case with the gods of Egypt, Apollonius claims that, on the contrary, the forms of the Greek gods were wrought by imagination, "a more cunning artist". When Damis airs the view that painting, if not imitative, would be no better than a child's daub, Apollonius reminds him of the shapes we see among the clouds on a windy day, which we endow with form.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, Philostratus declares that, while any artist desiring to make a picture of Ariadne might have painted a beautiful Ariadne, the Dionysus could have been painted only by love.<sup>6</sup> Philostratus thus recognizes imagination in a way that marks considerable advance on Aristotle's more timid criticism of Plato's view of art.

<sup>1</sup> Περὶ Ὑψους, 35, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Milton (in *De Quincey's Works* (Black, 1862), vol. 6, p. 317 f.): the Greeks, De Quincey thinks, had no word for the sublime, unless it were that which they meant by τὸ σεμνόν.

<sup>3</sup> *Meditations*, 3, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Vita Apoll.* 6, 19 (*Opera*, Paris, 1878, p. 130 f.).

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 2, 22: the whole of this passage marks a notable development in early aesthetic theory (*ed. cit.* p. 36 ff.).

<sup>6</sup> *Imagines*, 1, 14 (15) (*ed. cit.* p. 351 f.).



Neoplatonism, the last school of pagan philosophy, emerged in the third century of the Christian era, mainly among the Greeks of Alexandria, and had a distinctly oriental flavour. It attained its classic exposition in the *Enneads* of Plotinus (c. A.D. 205-270); and the sixth treatise of the first of these is wholly devoted to a discussion on the beautiful. Plotinus justly claims Plato as his spiritual ancestor; but he presses Platonism to its logical conclusion in one direction. Accepting Plato's distinction between the εἶδη and particular things, Plotinus recognizes an absolute One (corresponding to the Platonic Form of the Good and transcending all existence) from whose perfection there emanates, by way of expression, the divine intelligence (corresponding to the Aristotelian νοῦς), in which we participate, and from which in turn there emanates a world-soul (which corresponds, we may suppose, to the "Universal Life" of Stoicism) creating the sensible world and manifesting itself in us. By preserving its unity, the world-soul may return to the νοῦς; but it disintegrates to the extent to which it unites to the corporeal world. By descending into corporeality we are ensnared; but we have still power to shake off our fetters and return to our source. The peculiar interest of Plotinus for our purpose lies in his special recognition of the problem of beauty. He sees the formless multiplicity of matter united in physical beauty (which he tries to contrast with a supra-physical one) by the world-soul, manifesting itself, in the case of art, in a human soul. But it has its ground in the absolute One, in which alone is the possibility of all unity. The peculiar directness with which beauty is recognized is analogous to the mystical intuition of the absolute One. The Plotinian system protests vigorously against and finally breaks down the Greek tradition concerning formal design. Beauty is not symmetry, although it shines through it. A life-like statue is more beautiful than one which is less life-like, although perfectly symmetrical.<sup>1</sup> More important, however, is the fact that Plotinus, consciously trying to overthrow and replace Plato's view of art, stoutly resists the accepted, but by this time much criticized, doctrine of imitation, and especially the Platonic view of art as twice removed from reality. Physical beauty is an image directly issuing from a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Enneads*, 6, 7, 22.

source, not a mere imitation of a shadow. "Bodies become beautiful by participating in the reason that flows from the divine."<sup>1</sup> They are beautiful not in virtue of any material quality, but in virtue of an *εἶδος* given them by art, and this *εἶδος* is in the mind of the artist by virtue of his imagination.

While Aristotle gave a certain pre-eminence to music in his aesthetic theory, Plotinus somewhat unexpectedly depresses it below visual art. Perhaps here we have a clue (and it is not the only one) to the artificiality of the Plotinian system, which, behind its appearance of high spirituality, is in some respects fundamentally materialistic. For we may suspect that Plotinus, in his exaltation of painting and other visual arts, superstitiously regarded light as having a special affinity with mind, not by mere analogy, but by a real continuity of nature between the two. We know that oriental mysticism tends to regard mind as a refinement of matter, and to speak of it in terms of an imperceptibly fine line, as it tends to speak of life in terms of a rich milk, and of God in terms of what we should now call electricity.

#### § 4. *The Early Middle Ages*

By the time of Justinian, Neoplatonism, as an independent school of thought, was extinct. It had been the last effort of a great tradition; and with its decline Hellenic thought was bankrupt. It had never engaged the attention of the masses, for reasons which Saint Augustine has pointed out.<sup>2</sup> Having the appearance of a religious movement, it had no vitality as such, and was easily swept away by Christianity. But it had left its mark upon thought; and soon we find its influence upon the Christian Fathers. It was not for many, as for Augustine, the stepping-stone from pagan scepticism to Christianity; but through him at least it entered the Church as a force to be reckoned with alongside of existing dogmatics. In the formulation of her Christology, the Church opposed Neoplatonism unreservedly; but on other questions its influence, with

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 6, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, 7, 18-21. It lacked a religious founder, could not point to a means of obtaining permanently the inward peace it taught, and had no influence upon minds incapable of speculative thought.

the influence of the entire Hellenic tradition, gained easy access, and soon helped to mould the life of the Church. A number of anonymous writings of the fourth or fifth century of the Christian era came to be attached to the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, and exerted an enormous influence upon mediaeval reflection on beauty.

Confronted by opposing dogmatic influences, this aesthetic was in some measure always under criticism at the bar of theology until the age of the schoolmen. While the Hellenic, and especially the Neoplatonic, influence was felt on every side in the life of the Church, she was content, in her preoccupation with dogmatic issues, to leave open all philosophical questions not directly arising in the course of conciliar disputes. In some quarters Neoplatonism was suspect; but there is a discreet silence, as a rule, on the aesthetic as on other philosophical questions. Some opposition was encountered from time to time to the use of art in worship; but on the whole it was so ineffective as hardly to have retarded the steady growth and development of a vast new culture that has not improperly been called the true Renaissance,<sup>1</sup> since it exhibited vigorous life without the spirit of reaction. From the building of Saint Sophia in the early sixth century, Europe was swept for a millennium by a luxuriant growth of art, from Byzantium to the far north. But this millennium painted better than it knew. It might well provide the longest and most interesting chapter in a history of art;<sup>2</sup> but, in an account of the progress of aesthetic theory, there is comparatively little to be said.

The iconoclastic controversy that raged during the eighth and ninth centuries was not a revolt against art, but a theological objection to what seemed to be contrary to Holy Writ as, at that time by necessity, uncritically received.<sup>3</sup> While the aristocracy and some of the higher clergy tended to be sympathetic to the edicts, the hostility with which they were received by the body of the clergy

<sup>1</sup> William Morris, *Lectures on Art* (Macmillan, 1882), p. 131 f. Modern historians distinguish, of course, several renaissances, e.g. the Carolingian, besides those of the fifteenth and later centuries.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, O. M. Dalton's *East Christian Art* (O.U.P., 1925).

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon reminds us (*Decline and Fall*, c. 49) that the Emperor Leo III, who began the controversy by his edicts on images (A.D. 726-729), had been subject to Arab and Jewish influence and reproach.

and common people was quite uncompromising. The philosophic weapons with which iconoclasm might have been opposed were still blunt ; but the significance of the new art had sunk deep into the heart of a Christendom that was still, in aesthetics, inarticulate.

Even Saint Augustine made little impression on the development of aesthetics, although his recognition of a distinction between the good and the beautiful came as a blow to pagan complacency.<sup>1</sup> He wrote some books *de pulchro et apto*, at the loss of which he later confessed himself unconcerned.<sup>2</sup>

In Scotus Erigena (c. 815-877) we have a philosophical system that presents, among other features, an aesthetic theory. Here we may listen to the echoes of the iconoclastic controversy. Impressed by the fact that the beautiful may be both a snare and a revelation of God, Erigena was not slow to stress the antagonism of flesh and spirit ; but he was aware also of the problem of beauty. His *pulchritudo* is in the visible universe as the handiwork of God. All that is significant has beauty. Imitation is now definitely shelved as merely part of the technique of art : the beautiful is beautiful in being symbolic of God. This doctrine profoundly influenced later mediaeval thought. But unfortunately Erigena offered no adequate theory of the relation of beauty to knowledge.

Much vagueness on the question permeates the work of writers from the death of Erigena to the birth of Aquinas. But in this age of Abélard (1079-1142), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), and Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226), we trace growing restlessness and need for a clarification of the problem.

### § 5. *Aquinas*

The characteristic method of the earlier Middle Ages, that of starting from general and very simple principles and deducing from them relations more special and complex, is exemplified in Boethius, Anselm, and, especially, Erigena. With the thirteenth century comes a more elaborate analytic method. The supreme figure in

<sup>1</sup> But see *De Civitate Dei*, 11, 18 and 23 ; 22, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, 4, 13 : " non enim habemus eos, sed aberraverunt a nobis nescio quomodo ".

this movement is Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274), who, although giving no important place in his works to a theory of beauty, has some suggestive remarks on the subject. In view both of the magnitude of his place in philosophy and of his importance in our approach to the main problems of this present work, these compel attention here.

Saint Thomas takes as his starting-point the account of the beautiful contained in the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius. The paucity of his aesthetic theory, and his ready acceptance of so much of the old Hellenic tradition on the beautiful, are, when one considers the originality and depth of his works as a whole, very remarkable. Other problems were more pressing. In the age of Dante and Giotto, to discuss beauty was to discuss life. One does not expect an economic theory in an age of plenty, nor an aesthetic theory in a golden age of art. Where there is no problem, there can be no reflection.<sup>1</sup> Aquinas mentions, however, that "for beauty, three things are required: (1) a certain wholeness (*integritas*) or perfection, for that which is incomplete is ugly; (2) a due proportion (= *συμμετρία*) or consonance; and (3) clarity, so that things that are brightly coloured are called beautiful".<sup>2</sup> In a discussion *De Bono*, he says that beauty and goodness are *in subjecto idem*, but *ratione differunt*. They have a common basis in form; but the good concerns desire (*appetitus*), while beauty concerns the cognitive power (*vis cognoscitiva*). Things are called beautiful that give pleasure on sight (*quae visa placent*).<sup>3</sup> Like every cognitive power, sense has a *ratio*, whereby it delights *in sibi similibus*. Since

<sup>1</sup> Before a philosophy of art fully emerged, the exquisite beauty of mediaeval art had transfigured Europe. It has often been observed, on the other hand, that the age that first did seriously begin to reflect upon the nature of art was that which produced *rococo* and *marqueterie*, and that this was so because for the first time art had ceased to be the language of all and was becoming an artificial embellishment for the rich. This is profoundly true; but it may also be that it was the emergence of *rococo* and *marqueterie* that caused men to reflect upon art to an extent that till then had been unnecessary. By this paradox we may largely attribute the unprecedented strides in aesthetics in the present century to the unprecedented ravages of the materialism of the nineteenth.

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I, 39, 8: Jacques Maritain regards this as a definition of the essentials.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 5, 4 ad 1: Maritain regards this as intended to be a definition only *per effectum*.

cognition is by assimilation, and assimilation concerns the form, beauty pertains *ad rationem causae formalis*.<sup>1</sup> There is here, as in Plotinus, an affinity between perceived and percipient, which is the ultimate ground of the attraction; but in Aquinas the senses directly bear the affinity. Nevertheless, *ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur*.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps somewhat oddly, Saint Thomas acquiesces in the Plotinian exaltation of sight as having special affinity with the intellect.<sup>3</sup> But this is so because he considers it more connected with cognition, with which beauty is concerned, than are the other senses. That the whole universe, as a symbol of divine reason, must be beautiful to the eye that sees it in relation to its Creator, and that this beauty fascinates us because of an affinity with ourselves, is a conviction that by the time of Aquinas had so thoroughly saturated mediaeval thought and life that he does not seem to think it needs much exposition.

In order to reconstruct the ground of a Thomist theory of beauty it is necessary to probe deeper into scholastic philosophy. This we shall have to do at a later stage.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of tracing the development of modern aesthetics, it is sufficient to recall what the Angel of the Schools explicitly says on the question.

### § 6. *From Dante to the "Seicento"*

Much of what Aquinas does not tell us of the mediaeval attitude to art and beauty may be found within the *Divina Commedia*.<sup>5</sup> This work, unparalleled by any other single poem written in the Christian era, well shows how brilliantly vivid and yet delicately subtle is the aesthetic foundation of mediaeval life. Dante penetrated to the true core of mediaevalism, finding the spiritual in earthly things, which he always sees *sub specie aeternitatis*. He speaks too clearly as an artist to stimulate theoretic speculation on beauty.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on *De Nominibus Divinis*, c. 4, lessons 5 and 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3, 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Infra*. c. 4.

<sup>5</sup> In the bibliography which Croce appends to his article on aesthetics in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th ed.), he says: "For mediaeval aesthetics the best work is contained in books on Dante".

<sup>6</sup> The same is true, in varying measure, of the great company of poets and painters of his age. But see A. Stokes, *The Quattro Cento* (Faber, 1932).

Little interest is shown in the problem until the *seicento*, if we except such works as the *Apologie for Poetrie*, written at the end of the sixteenth century,<sup>1</sup> as an answer to certain puritanical objections raised at the Reformation. Calvin (1509-1564) ignores the problem, except for a few unhelpful allusions. Bacon (1561-1626) has an essay on beauty<sup>2</sup> in which he still finds it necessary to try to disentangle it from the fetish of symmetry. In the seventeenth century, even in France, Cousin could find but one philosophical work on the beautiful.<sup>3</sup> Condillac followed Locke in almost complete silence on the subject.

In the *seicento*, however, a distinction had begun to appear in Italy between "intellect" and "wit" (*ingegno*). Men of letters increasingly turned to the expression *non so che*, which became idiomatic, especially in French as *je ne sais quoi*, to indicate that character in art which seemed to be inexpressible in intellectual terms.

### § 7. *The Rise of the Modern Approach*

With Descartes (1596-1650) came an entirely fresh philosophical method, at the time ostensibly hostile to art, but destined to be the means of provoking its justification. We find Leibniz (1646-1716) less hostile, but candidly explaining sensory apprehension as confused knowledge, in opposition to the more distinct knowledge of conceptual thought.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, in Gravina (1664-1718) and Muratori (1672-1750) we find fresh effort, still hampered by past catchwords, but exhibiting awareness of the character of imagination as a means of apprehension.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586).

<sup>2</sup> *Essayes or Counsels*, 43 (in *Works*, Longman, 1858, vol. 6, pp. 478-480).

<sup>3</sup> Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau, et du bien*, p. 134 (1854): in these lectures (delivered in Paris in 1818) Cousin distinguished between the beautiful and the agreeable, and already proclaimed that *le beau comme beau est inutile* (*infra*. § 10, p. 37, n. 1).

<sup>4</sup> *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis*.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Muratori, *Della Perfetta Poesia Italiana* (ed. Venice, 1770), p. 99 ff. Even the heading of this chapter by Muratori prefigures remarkably the Crocean standpoint we are to consider in much detail in our next two chapters: "Della Fantasia, di cui si dà una general contezza. Differenza tra essa e l'Intelletto; e commercio tra loro. Immagini fantastiche, e lor divisione. . . . Particolarizzazione."

The first thinker to find a name for the philosophy of beauty was Baumgarten (1714-1762), who, recalling the distinction between *aestheta* and *noeta* in Greek philosophy, spoke of aesthetics, and in 1750 wrote a treatise so entitled. But apart from the fact that he named the subject as a separate discipline, we should find little interest in him. He took up the Leibnizian interpretation of sensory ideas (*repraesentationes sensitivae*) as *cognitio confusa*, ascribing to them, however, a perfection of their own, on the ground that while distinct ideas could never be poetical, confused ideas might be either vivid or obscure, and the more vivid they were the better the poetry. It is possible that the Pietist upbringing of Baumgarten may have obscured for him the core of the problem.

A considerable number of treatises on the beautiful now appear contemporaneously. Addison (1672-1719), Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Hutcheson (1694-1746), Hume (1711-1776), Hogarth (1697-1764), Burke (1729-1797), Reid (1710-1796), Alison (1757-1839),<sup>1</sup> and Reynolds (1723-1792) all show plainly how eager was the eighteenth century to solve the aesthetic problem. Hampered, however, by the scantiness of philosophical data on the beautiful, and overawed, no doubt, by the Cartesian revolution of thought, they speak hesitantly and with a philosophical *gaucherie* that contrasts ill with the general elegance of their literary style. A great deal of futile speculation about such matters as the serpentine line of beauty is introduced, and the problem of taste looms large. Much confusion arises between the pleasure of art and that of other forms of agreeable sensation, so that it would hardly be unfair to some of the utilitarian writers of this formative period of aesthetics to say that they tended to think of artistic appreciation in terms of appreciation of old port and fine cigars.

Much French and other culture was being assimilated at this time by a less sophisticated Germany, with inevitable reaction. Lessing (1729-1781) and Winckelmann (1717-1768), both steeped in Hellenic art and both considerably influencing Goethe (1749-1832) and Schiller (1759-1805), vigorously opposed, for instance, the efforts of Gottsched (1700-1766) to gallicize German drama.

<sup>1</sup> Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* first appeared in 1790.



There were thus two conflicting strands in German development in this pre-Kantian period of intense activity. The best work was in the criticism of art rather than in aesthetics, and therefore fragmentary from our point of view. We find also that music, in a century that produced first Bach (1685-1750) and Handel (1685-1759), and then Gluck (1714-1787), Haydn (1732-1809), and Mozart (1756-1791), in Germany alone, was scarcely taken into account in the earlier eighteenth century torrent of eloquence upon the beautiful.

### § 8. *Vico*

In the *Scienza nuova* of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), which first appeared in 1725, there is, on the other hand, a lively insight into the aesthetic problem that merits special attention.

Vico was nurtured on the classics, and eagerly assimilated them. While teaching rhetoric at the University of Naples, he interested himself in jurisprudence, in which his is now one of the great Neapolitan names. Fascinated by the problem of the relation of the universal principle of justice to the history of the human mind, he developed, in his *Scienza Nuova*, some points of paramount importance for the emerging science of aesthetics.

Dismissing the *cognitio confusa* of Leibniz and Baumgarten, he held poetry to be a mode of consciousness preceding the ratiocinative form, having imagination as its sole principle, and destroyed in the measure by which it is affected by ratiocination.<sup>1</sup> There is a logic of poetry distinct from intellectual logic. The nearer philosophy gets to universals the nearer it gets to truth; but poetry gets to truth to the extent to which it gets near to particulars.<sup>2</sup>

Reapplying the traditional dictum *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, Vico perceived the basis of a solution to the aesthetic problem: poetry addressed the senses, philosophy the mind of man.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Scienza nuova*, Elementi, 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* Elementi, 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* Introd.

§ 9. *From Kant to Hegel*

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the greatest philosophical mind of the generation following this whirlwind of cultural activity, and one of the most original thinkers of any age, seems to have doubted, in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*,<sup>1</sup> the philosophical possibility of giving an autonomous place to art and beauty. But in his later *Kritik der Urteilstkraft*,<sup>2</sup> he expressly gives them one. From his general metaphysical position that we can have no certain knowledge about ultimate reality, but only of things as they appear to beings endowed with our faculties, Kant proceeded to the view that the chaos of crude sensation confronting the mind is unified into phenomena by the operation, in perception, of imagination informed by intellect. He was able to reject both the utilitarian view that the beautiful pleases because of its usefulness for an end, and the intellectualist view that there is involved in the pleasure of art a relation to concepts. He perceived that while, in order to pronounce anything to be good, one must know what sort of thing it ought to be, this is not necessary in a judgment of what is beautiful ;<sup>3</sup> for the beautiful is that which is thought of as the object of a universal satisfaction apart from any conception.<sup>4</sup> He denied that there could be any rule or principle by which anyone might be compelled to acknowledge the beauty of an object. But when an object is placed before one and judged beautiful, one claims for one's judgment a universality that distinguishes it from the purely private affair of agreeable sensation.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the pleasure we experience in the beautiful is purely subjective, having no meaning at all apart from relation to our feeling ; and when we impute to others the pleasure we ourselves enjoy, we unjustifiably ascribe to the object of our pleasure a property of beauty that does not exist apart from our mind.<sup>6</sup> In a judgment of taste, which is quite independent of the conception of perfection, and for him the starting-point of aesthetic theory, Kant distinguished an impure mode, pronouncing an object beautiful with reference to a definite conception, from a pure mode, having

<sup>1</sup> Published 1781, 2nd ed., 1787.<sup>2</sup> Published 1790.<sup>3</sup> *Kritik der Urteilstkraft*, 4.<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 6.<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 8.<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.* 9.

no such reference ; and so he contrasted *pulchritudo vaga*, which is free beauty, with *pulchritudo adhaerens*, which is dependent upon conceptions.<sup>1</sup> But, in admitting the latter, he has to allow the communicability of the judgment of taste when thus dependent, although he insists that aesthetic pleasure in its purity is wholly subjective. On this question Kant appears to be aware of the grave difficulties involved, and at times to vacillate ; but he is too impressed by the import of larger issues in his system to be much concerned with these lesser problems. Kant also maintains a traditional, but, it is now widely held, artificial distinction, in that he upholds a theory of sublimity. Between the sublime and the beautiful he acknowledges no synthesis, although in his final conception of beauty one would appear to be implied, unless both the beautiful and the sublime may be regarded as factors in beauty, in Kant's final sense of the term.

The relation of beauty to the idea or postulate of reason is explained by a doctrine of symbolism. An idea is symbolized neither by way of a mere conventional sign nor abstractly as a "scheme", but through a similarity between the rules governing our reflection in the symbol and those governing the idea. In this way Kant makes the pronouncement that beauty is a symbol of the moral order (*Sittlichkeit*).

Because of Kant's methodological solipsism, subjectivity is writ large upon his aesthetic doctrine ; but, on the other hand, it is because of his methodology that the aesthetic problem arises with such peculiar force. It almost inevitably becomes, therefore, the point of departure for much post-Kantian speculation on the problem. Of course, the fact that the problem so satisfactorily came into focus in this manner is in itself no reason why the Kantian approach should be adopted. Here Kant may make a better critic than guide. There is no doubt, however, that the great strides made since Kant have been made largely on the lines of his methodology.

For fifty years after the publication of the *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, a tendency to trace aesthetic doctrine from Leibniz and Baumgarten, with their notion of art as *cognitio confusa*, is apparent in the suppositions underlying the writings of men such as Coleridge

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 16.

(1772-1834) and Wordsworth (1770-1850). That Kant at least left open the door for such a possibility must be admitted ; for his development of a distinction between *pulchritudo vaga* and *pulchritudo adhaerens*, and his description of genius as combining imagination and intellect, immediately suggested the reassertion of the *cognitio confusa*. The influence of Kant upon Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was, of course, enormous. This philosopher was able, in his system of pessimistic mysticism, to give a high place to will-less perception ;<sup>1</sup> for while all else that passes for knowledge is enslaved to will, aesthetic contemplation is free from this restriction. Schopenhauer saw, moreover, that aesthetic pleasure is fundamentally the same, whether stimulated by art or by nature.<sup>2</sup> We are thus able, in aesthetic experience, to survey will, and so obtain, though not deliverance, at least respite. Here we have the problem approached from a special point of view ; but by this time the process of the isolation of the aesthetic fact is rapidly developing.

Passing the works of Shelley (1792-1822), Herbart (1776-1841), and others, who express in varying measure the profounder thought of the age, we find Hegel (1770-1831) gathering up the whole question into a new system once again.

Hegel was considerably influenced by Schelling (1775-1854), although Schelling was by five years his junior. Both shared, at any rate, in a quest for objectivity in art that led Schelling in his latter years towards a strange, allegedly supra-sensuous world of beauty, but brought Hegel's aesthetics into an elaborate and yet very coherent philosophy of absolute idealism. Beauty is the Idea as it manifests itself to sense, as truth is the Idea as it manifests itself to thought.<sup>3</sup> For Hegel, "nature" is an empty and indefinite phrase ;<sup>4</sup> he thinks of it as apart from man, in whose body he sees more clearly than anywhere else the unity of a spiritual being in sensuous shape. As an absolute idealist, Hegel denies the distinction between experience and ultimate reality ; and so he feels he can do for the latter what Kant professed to do for the former. Applying his triadic

<sup>1</sup> *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3, 38 (cf. *Ergänzungen zum dritten Buch*, 33 : Vereinzelte Bemerkungen über Naturschönheit).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 3, 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Aesthetik*, I, c. 1 (in *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart, 1927, vol. 12, p. 160 f.).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* I, c. 3 (*ed. cit.* vol. 12, p. 230).

synthesis to aesthetic theory, he regards beauty as a synthesis of the abstract concept and the material data of sense. In aesthetic experience we see through the illusion of the diversity of sensible things into the rational core behind them. The self-particularization of the ideal in art is a process that fits neatly into the Hegelian system. Hegel saw that art was concerned with the individual; but he claimed to see a universal purpose permeating the heterogeneity of its subject-matter. This purpose is much deeper than the Aristotelian mitigation of the passions: it is the revelation of truth in the forms of sensuous shapes. Art contains, in this revelation, its own end in itself.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps nowhere is Hegel's brilliance, but also his glibness, more apparent than in his aesthetic theory.

### § 10. *Towards the End of the Nineteenth Century*

Criticized by Herbart and Schopenhauer, Hegel was followed by a flood of devotees by whom he was widely held to have said the last word on most matters. But even by some of these it was felt that, although he had not wholly neglected the formal side of beauty, this demanded further investigation. A generation on the threshold of immense development in natural science felt uneasily after a mechanism by which the allegedly revelatory sensuous forms actually worked. Herbart and Zimmermann had already been working on the question of the dependence of art upon unconscious association or appreciation; but, some decades after Hegel's death, when his philosophical influence was still in full spate, much more determined efforts were made towards what was called "exact" aesthetics. The most typical and probably also most laborious investigator in this field was Fechner (1801-1887), who believed that the most important aesthetic associations were common to humanity. No-one, for instance, confused the manifestations of youth with age, or those of intelligence with stupidity.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the charm of ruins is due wholly to association; for by itself a grey mass of formless stones elicits no pleasant sensation.<sup>3</sup> By omitting

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 3, c. 3 (*ed. cit.* vol. 14, p. 531 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lalo, *L'Esthétique expérimentale de Fechner* (Félix Alcan, 1908), part 1, c. 6, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, *loc. cit.* p. 105.

all reference to association, one could obtain certain formal rules. Fechner conducted detailed experiments.<sup>1</sup> As a result of these, he found, for example, that, of ten rectangular figures varying in length from a square to a rectangle with sides as 2 to 5, cut from white card and laid on a black cloth, that figure which had sides as 21 to 34 elicited the best general result, namely, 35 per cent of the preferences and no rejections; and that while the longest rectangle got no preference over its neighbour, the square got some over the rectangle next it.

Post-Hegelians such as Rosenkranz and Solger felt the need for an exposition of the Ugly; and Carrière, Schasler, and Hartmann, also impressed by this point, developed it.

Schopenhauer had distinguished music from other arts, as being as direct an objectification of the will as the world itself. It was a copy of the will, which becomes object in the idea, so that while other arts might speak only of a shadow, music proclaimed the thing itself.<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche (1844-1900) started from the viewpoint of Schopenhauer, taking up this attitude to music; but he intensified it by the grim, fanatical delight with which he viewed that same wild will that Schopenhauer had merely accepted as an unpleasant but unavoidable supreme fact. To Nietzsche, therefore, "music is to be judged by principles quite other than those of the plastic arts, and especially not by the category of beauty".<sup>3</sup> His estrangement from Wagner was due to his gradually becoming unable to find in him that specific attitude to music that he believed to be essential.

Very different is the temper we find prevalent in the England of this period. From the time of his graduation from Christ Church in 1842 till his death, John Ruskin (1819-1900) outpoured his voluminous writings on art. But while his profound erudition in art and the purity of his literary style make him one of the most interesting of writers, his positive significance in an account such as

<sup>1</sup> These prefigure the approach of modern experimental psychology to aesthetics (*infra*, Appendix, p. 247 f.). An example of Fechner's approach may be found in *Zur experimentalen Aesthetik*, published as part of *Abhandlung der Math.-Phys. Classe*, vol. 9, p. 555 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3, 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 16: "Man könnte demnach die Welt ebensowohl verkörperte Musik, als verkörperten Willen nennen" (ed. Leipzig, 1899; vol. 1, p. 113).

this is comparatively slight. Exhibiting the zeal of a reformer, he expresses elegantly the uneasiness of an age that was so quickly receding from the self-confident standpoint of the eighteenth century.

We have also in the second half of the nineteenth century the "play" theory of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903); the doctrine of the glorious uselessness of art (which must exist for its own sake),<sup>1</sup> taught by Oscar Wilde (1856-1900); the charming essays of Walter Pater (1839-1894); and George Santayana's theory of beauty as the objectification of subjective and irrational pleasure. But we look in vain in this period for a definite course of development.

Nevertheless, in Tolstoy (1828-1910), we find some prophetic indications of a new vista to which even Ruskin but hesitantly pointed. This very Russian writer perceived most vividly the social significance of art. If it is to have life, art must not be simply an aristocratic pastime, a pursuit by which to rise above a plebeian use of leisure, but a spontaneous and fundamental activity. "To say that a work of art is good, but incomprehensible to the majority or men, is the same as saying of some kind of food that it is very good but that some people can't eat it."<sup>2</sup> To simple, unperverted people, all art should be intelligible; and it should "unite men with God

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 6, p. 29, n. 3. The maxim "art for art's sake" is really a truism as we hope to exhibit in subsequent chapters on Croce. Art is independent of all other experience, such as morality, which is grounded upon it; but, on the other hand, all experience is resolved into the matrix from which art emerges. To ask, therefore, what will be the effect of a work of art upon moral character is to ask a meaningless question (*infra*, § 26, p. 65). Louis Arnaud Reid expresses the point well when he says (*A Study in Aesthetics*, 1931, p. 309): "The effects of art upon character will, in fact, depend upon character. As appreciation of art is dependent upon, among other things, richness of experience outside art, so great art will fail, not only in its aesthetic, but in its non-aesthetic and moral effects upon a mind which is immature, or crude, or ill-balanced in any way. Only those in some degree great can apprehend and assimilate, aesthetically and morally, the great. Tragedy will not affect a shallow mind aesthetically, nor purge it morally. Again, on the negative side, the effects of evil in art will similarly depend upon character." The answer to such a question may therefore be in terms of the motto of the Garter; for art is quite innocent of morality, and independent of it. But we may not say they are independent of each other, because, as we shall see, morality is dependent upon art.

<sup>2</sup> *What is Art?* (1896; tr. Aylmer Maude, 1898), c. 10, p. 100.

and with one another".<sup>1</sup> It is certainly true that there could hardly be a worse maxim for society or art than Schiller's *Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst*, if by *das Leben* we really mean the whole of experience, for *die Kunst* is its very heart. Tolstoy's insistent utterances on art as the basis of life rather than its eloquent superstructure, although raising innumerable problems that he does not attempt to solve, at least provide a clue to the direction of aesthetic development. We may say that with him the century closes.

### § II. *Modern Aesthetics*

We have now seen that during the two thousand years from the age of Plato to that in which Baumgarten happened to name the process of reflection on the problem of beauty, much attention had been given to it in the course of thought ; and that after this, when it had attained a measure of independence, its prestige steadily grew. But even by the end of the nineteenth century its place was still uncertain. Even those philosophers who had deemed it most important were aestheticians only by the exigencies of their metaphysical systems. And such writers as were primarily concerned with the problem of art were largely unable to find a footing for it, as they so much desired, that would hold against the best philosophical criticism of their day. Even, therefore, where the respectability of aesthetics was clearly recognized, it had still the status of philosophy's adopted child.

In the last decades of the century, however, philosophy itself was undergoing rapid development and change. It is said that it was during a walk at Clermont-Ferrand that the idea occurred to Henri Bergson (1859-1941), as a young man of twenty-five, that the traditional emphasis in philosophy on static and non-temporal values might be radically wrong ; and for it he substituted an emphasis on motion, change, and time. While it was not until the publication, in 1907, of *L'Évolution créatrice* that his work attained its full significance, it is one of his earlier and minor works, *Le Rire*

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 16, p. 163. Tolstoy, bred in an aristocracy more rigidly separated from the people than are most western aristocracies, had a more implicit faith in the masses than is common amongst social reformers in the west.



(1900), that specially interests the aesthetician. His treatment of the aesthetic problem is somewhat fragmentary and incidental to his main purpose ; but it shows well the trend of modern thought on beauty.

Quel est l'objet de l'art ? Si la réalité venait frapper directement nos sens et notre conscience, si nous pouvions entrer en communication immédiate avec les choses et avec nous-mêmes, je crois bien que l'art serait inutile, ou plutôt que nous serions tous artistes, car notre âme vibrerait alors continuellement à l'unisson de la nature. . . . Mais ce que je vois et ce que j'entends du monde extérieur, c'est simplement ce que mes sens en extraient pour éclairer ma conduite ; ce que je connais de moi-même, c'est ce qui affleure à la surface, ce qui prend part à l'action. Mes sens et ma conscience ne me livrent donc de la réalité qu'une simplification pratique. Dans la vision qu'ils me donnent des choses et de moi-même, les différences inutiles à l'homme sont effacées, les ressemblances utiles à l'homme sont accentuées, des routes me sont tracées à l'avance où mon action s'engagera. Ces routes sont celles où l'humanité entière a passé avant moi. . . . L'*individualité* des choses et des êtres nous échappe toutes les fois qu'il ne nous est pas matériellement utile de l'apercevoir. . . .

Enfin, pour tout dire, nous ne voyons pas les choses mêmes ; nous nous bornons, le plus souvent, à lire des étiquettes collées sur elles. Cette tendance, issue du besoin, s'est encore accentuée sous l'influence du langage. Car les mots (à l'exception des noms propres) désignent tous des genres. . . . Mais de loin en loin, par distraction, la nature suscite des âmes plus détachées de la vie. Je ne parle pas de ce détachement voulu, raisonné, systématique, qui est œuvre de réflexion et de philosophie. Je parle d'un détachement naturel, inné à la structure du sens ou de la conscience, et qui se manifeste tout de suite par une manière virginale, en quelque sorte, de voir, d'entendre ou de penser. Si ce détachement était complet, si l'âme n'adhérait plus à l'action par aucune de ses perceptions, elle serait l'âme d'un artiste comme le monde n'en a point vu encore. Elle excellerait dans tous les arts à la fois, ou plutôt elle les fondrait tous en un seul. . . .

L'art n'est sûrement qu'une vision plus directe de la réalité. Mais cette pureté de perception implique une rupture avec la convention utile, un désintéressement inné et spécialement localisé du sens ou de la conscience, enfin une certaine immatérialité de vie, qui est ce qu'on a toujours appelé de l'idéalisme. De sorte qu'on pourrait dire, sans jouer aucunement sur le sens des mots, que le réalisme est dans l'œuvre quand l'idéalisme est dans l'âme, et que c'est à force d'idéalité seulement qu'on reprend contact avec la réalité. . . .

Il suit de là que l'art vise toujours l'*individuel*. Ce que le peintre fixe sur la toile, c'est ce qu'il a vu en un certain lieu, certain jour, à une certaine heure, avec des couleurs qu'on ne reverra pas.<sup>1</sup>

Such passages in Bergson's characteristically restrained yet vivid style serve as a good introduction to the modern era. Changed modes of thought had made possible greater insight into the aesthetic problem. The aesthetic is now seen to be the individual, opposed to the universal, and seen, moreover, as a deep groundwork of experience. It is in some way nearer to reality than ordinary perception. This is the language of no other than the twentieth century, and M. Bergson introduces the century with brilliant insight.

With the publication, in 1901, of Croce's *Estetica*, aesthetics was placed on an incomparably surer foothold, with an autonomy till then quite unattained. As we propose to devote the next two chapters to an account and critical estimate of Croce more detailed than the scope of the present chapter allows, he need not here delay us beyond the observation that, while philosophy had generally tried to solve the problem of beauty by finding some niche for it in the superstructure of a system, Croce found at the bottom of his a fundamental place which, if his analysis is correct, much more gloriously exalts it. We must remark, however, that aesthetics had been dragged like an unwanted child by the side of one philosophy after another, until at last it found itself under the roof of a Neo-idealism. If we would inspect it today, we must do so in the metaphysical home of its adoption, whatever our opinion of that home may be.

Among other works, Croce published, in 1910, the *Problemi di Estetica*, and, in 1913, the *Breviario di Estetica*. The latter essay, while exhibiting a maturer stage in his thought, is, however, so compact as to be a more difficult starting-point than the longer *Estetica*.<sup>2</sup>

A fresh vigour and confidence conspicuously marks off this modern period from those we have reviewed in preceding sections.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bergson, *Le Rire*, 3, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Croce himself prefers stress to be laid on the *Breviario* rather than on the *Estetica*, so that at least the latter must always be read in the light of the former.

To some extent this change has been due, no doubt, to the development of modern psychology, which has been helpful in elucidating some aspects of the aesthetic problem ; but to Croce's analysis we ascribe much more profound significance than to any such aid from this source.

The most serious rival amongst Croce's contemporaries in the field has been Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), to whom must be credited the first exposition of the aesthetic theory of *Einfühlung*, that the apprehension of a sensible object immediately involves the apprehending mind in a tendency to a specific mental activity, and that this and the apprehension, both ultimately incapable of further analysis, are one inseparable activity. The consciousness of aesthetic pleasure in contemplating an object is due to the consciousness of this relationship of *Einfühlung*, which is a kind of inner mimicry.<sup>1</sup> Sir William Mitchell was amongst those who expounded this Lippsian theory. Its paramount importance will be critically considered later.<sup>2</sup>

There has also been much other good work in aesthetics during this period. Clive Bell's reminder that "only those for whom art is a constant source of passionate emotion can possess the data from which profitable theories may be deduced"<sup>3</sup> was timely. Reflection on the problem of beauty must be reflection from "the inside of art". What, then, do we find in this personal experience about the character of the emotion stimulated in us by works of art? They stimulate many different emotions ; but each of them has the same quality, and this must be produced by a same cause. The common quality is called "Significant Form".<sup>4</sup> This phrase loudly begs the question, "of what is the form significant?" to which Mr. Bell gives no satisfactory answer beyond saying that the form is significant of the highest value he knows experimentally, which, he tends to suggest, must be ultimate reality.

Roger Fry and Edward Bullough, working from a somewhat similar point of view, also largely contributed to modern development. It is to Mr. Bullough that we owe the conception of

<sup>1</sup> *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, vol. 4, *Weiteres zur Einfühlung*, pp. 465-519.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g. infra*, § 35, p. 84 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Art* (Phoenix Library ed.), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 28.

"Distance".<sup>1</sup> This, one of the most interesting conceptions of modern aesthetics, is achieved by a beholding of things in such a way as to emphasize only their objective features. Mr. Bullough speaks of "the Antinomy of Distance", because it has a negative side, eliminating the practical attitude to things, and a positive one, involving our elaboration of the experience on the new basis which emerges from its inhibitory action. The degree must be just sufficient to evoke the aesthetic response; and Mr. Bullough seems to require the utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance, so that aesthetic experience is poised as on a knife's edge. We may interpret Mr. Bullough's "Psychical Distance" as an attitude equivalent to that recommended by Croce when he describes himself resisting on the one hand distraction by logical reflection and on the other abandonment to the attractions and repulsions of impulse and feeling, so that he may "persist in the intuitive attitude". Leo Stein prescribes looking at an object or scene without allowing one's attention to become "inventorial" and yet without permitting the mind to wander or become hypnotized, until the parts of the picture seem suddenly to slip together and form an aesthetic unity.<sup>2</sup>

There is a tendency on the part of some modern writers to approach the problem from too narrowly psychological a point of view. Indeed, Charles Mauron entitles a chapter in an essay that Mr. Fry has translated, "Aesthetics a Branch of Psychology".<sup>3</sup> This is not helpful; and such a *simplistic* view does not get us far either in isolating the aesthetic fact or in relating it to other problems of philosophy or religion. Nevertheless, it is plain not only that psychology has much to tell us about aesthetics, but that it may provide an auxiliary approach to the aesthetic problem. It cannot do more than that without doing less than justice to art.

On the other hand, Samuel Alexander, R. G. Collingwood, and

<sup>1</sup> *British Journal of Psychology*, vol. 5, part 2, June 1912: "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle". But in *Johann Elias Schlegel* (Blackwell, 1945), Miss E. M. Wilkinson discusses (p. 129 ff.) how much that eighteenth-century German prefigured the idea.

<sup>2</sup> *A B C of Aesthetics* (1927), pp. 75-76: we consider later the conception of "Distance" in relation to our main problem (*infra*, § 64, p. 199 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> *Aesthetics and Psychology* (1935), c. 1.

Philip Leon are among the many thinkers who have given attention to the wider implications of the subject. There has been steady progress in work of this kind since Professor Moore's *Principia Ethica* appeared. The question of association raised in that book<sup>1</sup> has been freed of much of the confusion attending it in previous centuries, and we now incline more generally to think of associations as internal to the aesthetic object rather than external to it. When we say that the associations of some entity have changed, we mean that the aesthetic object itself, consisting of the entity and of its associations, has changed.

The sharpest critic of Croce is one who thought in a similar idealist tradition, the late Signor Giovanni Gentile, his contemporary, whose extremely immanent philosophy repudiated everything purporting to transcend the activity of thought, which alone is reality. For Gentile, beauty must be thought in its aspect of subjective feeling, although he uses the term "feeling" not in the usual psychological sense, but in a special one connected with his immanent system.<sup>2</sup> It seems that for Gentile everything must contain the subjective form of feeling as well as the objective matter of what is thought, and that by a subsequent act of thinking one may analyse the thought, as it was, and describe this subjective element in it as "beauty". He appeals back to Kant, against Croce, to maintain that intuitions without conceptions are blind;<sup>3</sup> and he denies that art and scientific knowledge have different objects, as Croce insists they have, the particular and the universal respectively.<sup>4</sup> His thrusts are singularly ineffective against Croce, however, even on the presuppositions of his own more extreme position as an idealist. In any case, in spite of the wide divergence of view between the two philosophers, much in Croce that has given him supremacy as an aesthetician is readily admitted by Gentile to be important and true. When, for instance, we read in Gentile that the world of the thinker and of the practical man is a laborious construction, while the world of the poet is the soul underlying that construction, and that this underlying soul is common to both king and peasant, to the erudite and the simple, we may know that, whatever be the

<sup>1</sup> *Principia Ethica*, c. 6, s. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *La Filosofia dell' arte*, I, 4, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 2, 5.

protests of Gentile against his Italian contemporary, the major issues for which Croce strove in the *Estetica* have been clearly won.<sup>1</sup>

But this profound awareness of the significance of aesthetic experience has been wider than the limits of the tradition whose culmination we have now briefly reviewed. The artists themselves have begun to speak more unfalteringly than ever before; and from them we may often obtain insight not always vouchsafed by aestheticians. Extremely informative, for instance, are the letters of Van Gogh and the utterances of Picasso. But, adhering to the path to which our very perfunctory sketch has led us, we turn to the laureate, Benedetto Croce.

<sup>1</sup> The aestheticism of the late nineteenth century is now almost meaningless. It strikes us as odd, nowadays, to find a distinguished moralist such as Maurice Blondel having inveighed against it, as a young man, in the first edition of *L'Action* (Alcan, 1893), as "égoïsme radical" and "panthéisme subjectif", concealing "une philosophie très arrêtée" (vol 1, pt. 1, c. 2, p. 16). But the danger was real, so long as it was necessary, as it was when Blondel wrote, to fear *aesthetes* and an aesthetic *cult*. For post-Crocean philosophy, the fear of an aesthetic cult need be no greater than that of a mathematical one, and *aesthetes* are no more dangerous than alchemists. But ethics may still be imperilled by misunderstanding the nature of aesthetic experience.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE *ESTETICA*§ 12. *Intuition and Expression (Estetica, c. 1)*

CROCE'S *Estetica* is the first volume of his great work, *Filosofia come scienza dello spirito*.<sup>1</sup> It is in two parts, *Teoria* and *Storia*. We shall have occasion to refer to the historical part, as also to other works of Croce, but it is the theoretical part we propose to examine in detail. This is based on a paper read before the Accademia Pontaniana di Napoli in the spring of 1900, under the title *Tesi fondamentale di un' Estetica come scienza dell' espressione e linguistica generale*. Although we must also consider later and maturer works that Croce wrote, it is in the *Estetica* that we find the clearest general account of his doctrine. The *Teoria* of the *Estetica* is divided into eighteen chapters. At the risk of occasionally appearing to introduce material not strictly necessary for our purpose, we shall consider all these in their order, in the eighteen sections of this chapter of our work. It is, in fact, simpler to view the *Estetica* as a whole than it would be to give expositions of peculiarly relevant chapters of it. The significance of Croce's aesthetic cannot be made clear apart from his general philosophical position.

Croce opens his thesis by positing two forms of human know-

<sup>1</sup> We translate *spirito* as *mind*. Croce's English translator, Mr. Ainslie, uses *spirit*, preferring it, no doubt, with many English writers on Croce, on the ground that *mind* is so commonly used in the restricted sense of *intellect*. The terms *spirit*, *soul*, and *mind* are used in a very loose manner in all European languages. But we regard *spirit* as used in English as an even more unsatisfactory and misleading translation of Croce's *spirito*; for it is used on the one hand in a vague and flimsy sense, and on the other in a sense marking a distinction from matter that Croce does not intend. Professor William Wallace, in his introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* (p. xlix ff.), justifies his translation of *Geist* as *mind*; and Dr. Carr follows this usage in writing on Croce. Of course, Croce's *spirito* is an immanent universal mind: the individual mind is only a phase of it. Much of our criticism of Croce will arise from the fact that we do not accept such immanentism.

ledge, intuitive and logical. The first is obtained through imagination (*fantasia*)<sup>1</sup> and the second through the intellect (*intelletto*). Intuitive knowledge produces images, and is logically, but not temporally, prior to logical knowledge, which produces concepts. Intuitive knowledge is an independent form of knowledge, below logical knowledge as its ground, and bearing to it the same kind of relationship that speech bears to grammar, namely, being that without which the other cannot exist ; for without images we can have no concepts.) Intuitive knowledge need not be perception of the real ; for not only can I imagine myself using a typewriter in Edinburgh (as I am in fact doing) but I can imagine myself using another typewriter in Oxford (which in fact I am not doing). But if we can suppose the existence of a human mind having intuitions for the first time, it would have perception of nothing but the real. Where all is real, however, nothing is real, so that such intuitions, being neither of the real nor of the unreal, would be pure intuitions, not perceptions (*non percezioni, ma pure intuizioni*).<sup>2</sup> "Intuition is of the undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and the simple image of the possible. In intuition we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to external reality, but objectify our impressions without addition, whatever they may be."<sup>3</sup> Nor are intuitions necessarily spatial or temporal. In some intuitions there may be spatiality without time ; in others temporality without space. In listening to music we are not conscious, without an act of interruptive reflection, of temporal sequence. Intuition reveals, not space or time, but individual character. Croce thus exalts art, not by placing it on a mysterious pinnacle that does not exist, as we have seen former aestheticians usually tried to do, but by placing it below logic, as the ground of the latter.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Italian, *fantasia* (imagination) is contrasted with *immaginazione* (fancy). In English, at least since Coleridge, Fancy is the irresponsible elf, and Imagination her more respectable stepsister ; while in Italian it is *Immaginazione* who is flighty. Croce denies the reality of the distinction to some extent, in the later *Breviario* (pp. 31-34) ; but it is important to note what it is that is being distinguished. We consider the question later : *infra*, § 32, p. 74 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Estetica*, c. I, p. 6 (4<sup>a</sup> ed., Bari, 1912) ; *infra*, p. 73, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> This point of view, characteristic of modern aesthetics, but fully established only by Croce's revolutionary analysis, is well expressed by Professor



There is also a boundary on the side of matter, which mind experiences but does not produce. Matter is attacked and conquered by form, giving place to concrete form. Matter is changeable; form is constant, for it is mental activity. Without matter, however, form would not leave its abstraction and become real. Associationist theories of aesthetics either naïvely make intuition simply sensualist or, by regarding the process as in some way formative, tacitly admit the distinction between intuition, as mental activity, and sensation.

(Croce completely identifies intuition with expression,<sup>1</sup> saying that our disinclination to do so arises from an illusion that we have intuitions which we are not necessarily able to express. But in fact our patrimony of intuitions is much smaller than we believe. If we do intuit a scene pictorially we are able to express it: when we fail to do so it is due to the fact of our simply not having intuited it. What we often call intuition is merely sensation or impression unassimilated by the mind. A poet's intuition as well as his expression is verbal, as a painter's is pictorial and a musician's musical. For Croce, intuition is expression, and expression is intuition.

R. G. Collingwood in *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (O.U.P., 1925), pp. 16-17: "The aestheticism which regards art as a higher activity than perception or thought seems to be based on two motives. First, it is due to the fact that to an adult and civilized man art is difficult; it costs him a struggle to put himself at the aesthetic or imaginative point of view, and this struggle is taken for a struggle towards a more highly-developed activity, whereas it is in fact a struggle to recapture a more unsophisticated frame of mind. . . . The child does not struggle to reach the imaginative point of view; he lives habitually in it; but the educated man cannot achieve it except by a struggle, because he must rid himself of the habits imposed upon him by his education, and think himself back into childhood. Secondly, aestheticism confuses the distinction between one kind of art and something else. A view of art which is based exclusively on studying great works of art concludes naturally enough that art is a high and difficult thing, an aristocratic activity, to be approached only by people built on the scale of Dante and Michelangelo; and obviously it takes a greater man to write the *Paradiso* than to see that this is a pen and that twice two is four. But to compare trivial examples of thought — and what we call common sense is only thought at a comparatively trivial level — with great examples of art is not the way to a just comparison. Art includes both the *Paradiso* and a child's scribble or a guttersnipe's discordant whistle; thought includes both the multiplication table and the *Principia*." (Cf. Mark x, 15: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein".)

<sup>1</sup> *Estetica*, c. 1, p. 11: "L'attività intuitiva tanto intuisce quanto esprime".

§ 13. *Intuition and Art (Estetica, c. 2)*

Some aestheticians have admitted that art is intuition, while not admitting that intuition is always art. Some have thought that art is an intuition of intuitions, as they have thought science to be a concept of concepts. But as science goes on from simpler concepts to more complex ones, so art, that is, what is generally called art, *per antonomasiam*, goes on from simpler intuitions to more complex ones. All intuitions, however simple or complex, are always intuitions of sensations. We cannot intuit intuitions, because there is no intuition which is not an intuition of sensations. So Croce formulates one of his most important propositions that art is the expression of impressions, not the expression of expressions.<sup>1</sup>

Croce admits differences of extension amongst intuitions, but not of intensity. A popular love-song is as intense as any by Leopardi; it is limited only extensively by being much less complex an intuition. To philosophy, *scientia qualitatum*, quantitative differences are of no account. So the cult of the genius is superstitious, and *poeta nascitur* should read *homo nascitur poeta*. Not genius, but humanity has fallen from heaven.<sup>2</sup>

When Croce considers whether the aesthetic fact consists in form or content or both, he refers us to his dictum that art is the expression of impressions, and further defines the latter as emotionality that has not been aesthetically elaborated (*emozionalità non elaborata esteticamente*),<sup>3</sup> denying that the aesthetic fact consists in

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 2, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Croce admits no philosophical distinction between the intuitions of persons whom we ordinarily call "artists" and those of other people. The aesthetic fact is internal, common to all. Great artists have greater intuitions than other people; and the stock from which they take their intuitions is on a much richer scale; but the process is the same for all. Delacroix describes how the paintings he might make seem to wait their turn like people in a queue, and how he is nevertheless at a loss which to choose: "Je suis, depuis une heure, à balancer entre Mazeppa, Don Juan, Le Tasse et cent autres" (*Journal*, ed. Joubin, 1932, vol. 1, p. 73). Not many intuit on this scale; but the description is fundamentally true of all aesthetic experience. The "creative urge" that distinguishes the "artist" is a practical, not a purely aesthetic activity.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 2, p. 19. This is an important Crocean definition, without which many passages in the *Estetica* would be very obscure (e.g. *infra*, § 21, p. 57).

the content alone (*i.e.* the impressions) or in a joining (*aggiunzione*) of content and form (*i.e.* impressions and expressions) but in form alone. The impressions are like water put through a filter, which, appearing on the other side, are water as much as before, but are now *filtered water* : it is the filter, not the water, that makes water filtered water. The water is therefore not superfluous ; but the point that is stressed is that between content and form there is "no passage" (*non vi è passaggio*). This is to say, that there is no determinate or determinable quality in the water which can ever so transform it — only the filter can do it.

Aestheticians have often insisted that art is appearance (*Schein*) or sentiment, because they have felt the necessity of distinguishing it from the more complex fact of the perception of the real ; but if the concept, and historical reality as such, be excluded, there remains no other content than reality to be apprehended in pure intuition.

It is commonly admitted that a work of art must have unity, which is the same thing as saying that it must have unity in variety. But some will say that this unity is one thing in a simple expression, such as the *eureka* of Archimedes, and another in a composite expression, such as a tragedy in regular form. They will regard the latter as an expression unifying a vast array of expressions. But in the work of art, however complex and however great, all expressions must be put back into a crucible, to be melted down to a mass of impressions again, before the more extensive expression can emerge.

Artists are generally credited with both passion and Olympic serenity, because they are rich both in impressions and expressions. It is the activity of subjugating the tumult of passion that makes serenity possible. Art liberates ; but it cannot liberate from nothing. The richer the content of impressions that is expressed the greater the serenity of freedom from them ; but this is only because the activity of expression must have been great enough to subjugate it.

#### § 14. *Art and Philosophy (Estetica, c. 3)*

Having established the independence of the lower, or aesthetic, form of knowledge, Croce proceeds to show that the higher, or

conceptual, form of knowledge has no such independence. Speaking is not thinking logically ; but thinking logically *is* at the same time speaking. (By “ speaking ” is meant all utterance, verbal or otherwise, so as to include geometrical figures, algebraical numbers and other shorthand methods of communication.) Not merely does clarity of speech help clarity of thought, as is widely recognized, but a book cannot be clearly thought out and confusedly written. Croce does admit, however, that a clear thinker may speak elliptically ; but this is merely because he adopts a peculiar manner of expression, which he and some others find adequate as social communication, but which is inadequate for most people. So a science uses technical terminology and abbreviations.

Every scientific work is also a work of art, just as all prose is also poetry, for poetry is the mother-tongue of humanity. Expression and concept exhaust the cognitive intellect : all the speculative life (*vita teoretica*) of man is spent in passing from one to the other and back again.

Croce regards history as positing intuitions, not constructing abstractions, nor seeking laws, nor forming concepts. It is directed *ad narrandum, non ad demonstrandum*. The *individuum omni modo determinatum* is its kingdom, as it is the kingdom of art ; and it is therefore included under art. If it be objected that history ought to elaborate the concept of a person such as Charlemagne, of or an event such as the French Revolution, Croce replies that history cannot do otherwise than take such a personage or event as individual fact with individual physiognomy, and that, as logicians say, one cannot have a concept of an individual, but only a representation. Historicity is distinguished from pure imagination (*pura fantasia*) only as one intuition is distinguished from another, *i.e.* in the memory. All historical criticism is dominated by the principle of probability : sources and authorities are examined, and the jury is satisfied by the most credible evidence of those who can best remember and have not desired to falsify truth. But the certainty of history is not that of science : it never consists in analyses and demonstration. While history receives into itself philosophical distinctions, it remains concrete and individual.

§ 15. *Historicism and Intellectualism in Aesthetics (Estetica, c. 4)*

It has been held that art should have verisimilitude. If by this is meant historical credibility, Croce denies it ; but if coherence is meant, he concurs. Fairies must have verisimilitude in that they must be coherent intuitions. Everything that is truly (*i.e.* coherently) imagined, is possible. There are convincing fairies and fairy-tales and unconvincing ones. An unconvincing personage is one that is badly drawn, and an unconvincing story is one that is badly told.

Again it has been held that art can unite the intelligible with the sensible to represent ideas or universals ; but so-called art of this kind is seen to be a form of science vulgarized. The aesthetic theory of the *typical*, that art should make the species shine in the individual, falls likewise. If, however, *typical* means individual, *to typify* is *to characterize*, which is merely a verbal variation of *to express*, so that we call an expression typical when we might as well call it simply aesthetic.

Some have seen the essence of art to lie in the symbol. As the symbol is inseparable from the artistic intuition, it *is* the intuition ; for art has no double bottom. All is symbolical in art, because all is ideal. But if we pretend that we can express the symbol on the one hand and on the other the thing symbolized, the symbol in this case is in fact the exposition of an abstract concept. There are, however, legitimate allegories, from the point of view of art. A sculptor may produce a statue of a beautiful woman ; and he may then entitle it " Beautiful Woman " ; but if he does in fact entitle it " Clemency " the allegory is *post festum*. It does not change the work of art, but is an expression externally added to another expression. One may still accept the statue as " Beautiful Woman " and reject the title " Clemency ".

Here Croce devotes some time to demolishing the theory of artistic and literary classes, by which he means the attempt to deduce expression from concept and to find in the former the laws of the latter. For example, one cannot ascertain how knighthood or cruelty or domestic life ought to be represented, because these are concepts, logico-aesthetic forms. To the extent to which they are

aesthetic forms they are already expressions. There are no laws of style, save that art is not art except to the extent to which it is the expression of impressions. We may classify works of art as tragedies, seascapes, sonatas, and the like ; but this is of no more significance than the classification of books in a library, which may as well be by size or publisher as by theme.

§ 16. *Analogous Errors in Historiology and Logic (Estetica, c. 5)*

Under this head Croce examines other errors that have damaged both logic and the theory of history. He denies the possibility of a philosophy of history, or a sociology, or any other attempt to extract from history universal historical laws. To talk of a historical law or a historical concept is like talking of a qualitative quantity or a pluralistic monism. While it is possible to extract universal laws from history (as is done in ethics, for instance, and the empirical sciences) there are no universal historical laws, for, as has already been asserted, history is concerned with individual fact. Logic is also impaired by introducing the authoritative principle of the *ipse dixit*, indispensable in history, but irrelevant in the science of thought. The problems of the nominalists, conceptualists and realists, were the disentanglement of extraneous material from logic, which, as the science of concepts, is the science of universals. The concept or universal is, abstractly considered, inexpressible. There must be an expression ; but its quality is not deducible from the nature of the concept. The only truly logical propositions, which we have just seen to be, strictly, aesthetico-logical propositions, are those whose proper and exclusive content is the determination of a concept, and these propositions are definitions. Science is a complex of definitions, unified in a supreme definition : it is a system of concepts or *sommo concetto*. Syllogistics is the art of exposing, the art of debate, and as such has a proper function. The syllogism, verbal or mathematical, may be an *idem per idem*, from the point of view of invention ; but it is the means of informative reasoning. The concept alone is the logical fact ; and the syllogism is the form in which it manifests itself. Therefore, as was seen in our account of the third chapter,<sup>1</sup> it is

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 14, p. 49 f.

plainer than ever, insists Croce, that to reason well is in fact to express oneself well. Fundamentally, the principle of contradiction itself is simply the aesthetic principle of coherence. It is true that one may write an erroneous thought exquisitely ; but this is because to write well is to have a clear intuition of one's own thought, whether it be erroneous or not. To write well means to have aesthetic, but not necessarily scientific truth. Logic ought to be liberated from aesthetics, not applied to aesthetics. Aristotelian logic ought to be called verbal or formalistic. Logic, the science of thought, ought to be formal, for it is the science of the concept, as aesthetics, the science of the imagination, is the science of expression.

### § 17. *Theoretical and Practical Activity (Estetica, c. 6)*

There are only these two forms of theoretical activity. But man also wills and acts. The will is that activity of mind which produces not knowledge but actions. Now, we cannot will without knowing. The relation of double degree that we found to exist between intuition and concept we now find between theoretical activity and practical, on a larger scale. Practical activity is grounded in theoretical activity. Will cannot be uninformed. Blind will is not will : true will has eyes.<sup>1</sup>

If it be objected that philosophers may be mediocre in practical affairs, while men of action may have no disposition to philosophize, Croce replies that such distinctions are merely empirical and quantitative. In the spheres in which the man of action does act he employs very clear intuitions and concepts ; for otherwise he could not will even the most ordinary actions. Once the statesman finds himself in the dark about the theoretical background of his action, his action ceases. He may then become a Hamlet, or else develop the calm disposition of the artist or philosopher. But "practical" judgments do not exist. The judgments of the man of affairs are the same kind of judgments that are made by artist and philosopher ; for there are only these two kinds of knowledge.

The aesthetic fact is completed internally, so that when we will

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 6, p. 56 : "La volontà cieca non è volontà : la volontà vera è occhiuta".

to open our mouths to speak, or to stretch out our hands to play the piano, this second movement is a practical fact, or fact of will. There is no such thing as an external work of art, but only practical activity that may follow the essentially internal work of art.<sup>1</sup>

Croce then formulates the doctrine of what he calls the practical blamelessness (*incolpabilità pratica*) of art.<sup>2</sup> There is no such thing as sincerity in art, if by sincerity is meant some kind of moral earnestness or duty not to deceive. To the extent that he expresses his impressions (*i.e.* to the extent that he is an artist), the artist cannot deceive ; but no question of moral duty can arise. If critics do not like the impressions that an artist has, they may, if they will, try so to change society that the impressions no longer exist ; but so long as they do exist, they must not blame the artist for expressing them, for they are the only material he has to express. Criticism may sometimes assist the expressions that are being made ; but at best it can be only a midwife, not a mother.

### § 18. *Analogy between the Theoretical and the Practical* (*Estetica*, c. 7)

As the theoretical activity is twofold, so is the practical activity. The lower of the practical grades is "economy" (*economia*), and the higher "morality" (*morale*). To will economically is to will an end : to will morally is to will a rational end. But we cannot will the rational without willing it as our particular end. We admire Iago and Machiavelli's Prince for their strength of will, although we think it devoted to other than a moral end. The moral man unites with the strength of an Iago's will the good will of a saint. Every moral action has a utilitarian ground, as every concept is grounded in imagination ; but the purely utilitarian side is not concerned with the moral one. As aesthetic intuition knows the phenomenon or nature, and concept the noumenon or mind, so economic activity wills the phenomenon, and moral activity the noumenon.

<sup>1</sup> The sequence is, of course, logical, not temporal. The problem of the artist whose aesthetic intuitions are developed in the course of this practical activity will be considered later (*infra*, § 35, p. 85 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 6, p. 59 f.



§ 19. *The Exclusion of Other Forms of Mind (Estetica, c. 8)*

These four moments of mind imply one another regressively by their concretion, so that there can be no concept without aesthetic intuition, no utility without both, and no morality without all three other grades. Alone independent is aesthetic fact. Of the other three grades, morality is the most dependent.

It is important that, as Croce insists, there is no fifth moment or grade of mind. Law, for example, is a complex activity, derived from special developments of the four moments. Religion is no exception. Religion is always in some way identified with one's patrimony of knowledge. According to Croce, religion was the whole patrimony of knowledge of primitive peoples: our patrimony of knowledge is our religion.<sup>1</sup> Croce goes on to deny categorically the possibility of metaphysics, on the same ground on which he denied a philosophy of history. Metaphysics would have to posit an activity, of which it would be the product, anciently called "mental" or "higher" imagination (*fantasia mentale o superiore*) and now, more usually, intuitive intellect or intellectual intuition (*intelletto intuitivo o intuizione intellettuale*), which, by uniting the characters of imagination and intellect, would provide a form of mind *sui generis*, enabling us to pass from concept to intuition, from infinite to finite, from form to matter. We possess no such faculty. Others have posited a kind of aesthetic intellectual intuition, which Croce calls mystical (*mistica*), and which he considers no less absurd. In this latter activity, if it did exist, we should be able to create our own impressions as well as express them.<sup>2</sup> It would be as foolish to criticize this kind of thought as to criticize the botany of the Garden of Eden.

§ 20. *The Indivisibility of Expression (Estetica, c. 9)*

Croce points out the legitimacy of inquiring at this stage whether the aesthetic grade may be subdivided into two further grades, in

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 8, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 8, p. 76: "Con essa siamo nei domini, non già nella scienza della fantasia, ma della fantasia stessa, che crea il suo mondo con gli elementi mutevoli delle impressioni e del sentimento".

view of the fact that there have been established two grades, the theoretical and the practical, each subdivided into two further grades that bear the same relation to one another within the set that each set of grades bears to the other set. Philosophically possible as it would appear to be, in the Crocean system, Croce denies that in fact the aesthetic grade is so further subdivided. From simple internal observation he argues that no formal difference can be found amongst aesthetic facts, and that, as these facts are so many individuals of a species (expression), this species cannot — in the language of the schools — be made to perform the office of genus. Nothing in life repeats itself; and as every impression or content therefore differs from every other, so a classification of the expressions of these impressions is philosophically impossible. Croce denies, for instance, that a translation is, strictly, possible: every translation either spoils the original, or else, by putting it back into the crucible, with the translator's other impressions, is a new expression, with a different content.

Distinctions such as that between classic and romantic, simple and ornate, proper and metaphorical, are incapable of any aesthetic definition, because they do not exist. Croce cites the case of metaphor. All language is metaphorical, or none is. We choose a metaphor merely because it is the right word; and we reject the "proper" word because it is less expressive, and therefore most improper.

§ 21. *Sentiment; the Distinction between the Beautiful and the Ugly (Estetica, c. 10)*

The word "feeling" or "sentiment" (*sentimento*) is very ambiguously used. We have found it (a) as a synonym of "impression" and (b) as designating the non-logical character of the aesthetic fact — two very different meanings. Here it is used in neither of these loose ways, but as meaning a special, non-cognitive activity, whose positive and negative poles are pleasure and pain. If this is to be regarded as an activity of nature, not of mind, of what can it consist, as we have no knowledge of activity except as activity of mind? Nature is, by definition, the merely passive, inert and

material. But feeling, with its poles of pleasure and pain, is certainly activity. It is nothing more than that same activity that has been called economic, consisting of the appetite or desire for some individual end, without any moral determination. Croce thus distinguishes "feeling" in this exact sense from "feeling" in either of the loose senses to which we have alluded. It is of some importance to know what is the significance of the loose usage with which he contrasts his own. In such loose usage, "feeling" is doubtless "sensation", and therefore "impression" which is not attended to as such by the expressive activity. It remains, on the contrary, confused. Its significance lies in the fact that it may be regarded as the vehicle of an implicit economic volition: it certainly does not lie in any quality of which it is the sensation. We have seen that, by definition, impression is simply *emozionalità non elaborata esteticamente*.<sup>1</sup> What Croce wants to avoid is any confusion between "feeling" as true sentimento, which is a respectable activity of mind, in the "economic" grade, i.e. "lower practical" activity, and "feeling" as that *emozionalità non elaborata esteticamente*, which is not activity of mind at all, but merely the confused impression or sensation or rough material upon which no form, not even the aesthetic, has yet been imposed, but which is often called, loosely, and in a misleading fashion, *sentimento*.

✓ But true ("economic") *sentimento* may be also confused with something else. While it is confused, on the one hand, with something which is not mental activity at all, as we have seen in the foregoing paragraph, it may be confused, on the other hand, with something which is mental activity, but not its own, proper *mode of activity*. In particular, it may be confused with the aesthetic mode. Hedonism, by reducing all forms of mind, including the aesthetic, to the "economic" form, makes just this confusion, and so can make no distinction, in the long run, between, for example, the fact of morality and the fact of art.

✓ While, of course, we deny any such facile reduction of the forms of mind, we do not deny that one form can accompany the other. Indeed, they all do; and each form has, for concomitant, volitional pleasures and pains. But we must not fail to distinguish what is

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 48.

merely concomitant with what is the principal fact. Discovery of truth and the satisfaction of a moral duty fulfilled both produce in us joy (*i.e.* pleasure, which is "economic" activity) because, by attaining to those forms of mind, we attain to that to which they were practically (*praticamente*) tending as to their end. But even when in such union, aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual satisfaction, economic satisfaction, and moral satisfaction remain always distinct, because they are fundamentally distinct in fact. The distinction between values or feelings of value and feelings that are merely hedonistic and without value falls, as likewise do distinctions such as that between objective and subjective feelings, and between the *Gefallen* and *Vergnügen* of German philosophy. The triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful has finished its task, because we welcome even the selfish, subjective, merely pleasurable feelings among the respectable forms of mind. Value is simply activity that unfolds itself freely; and disvalue is its contrary, namely, impeded activity. This definition is important in elucidating one of the most disputed questions in aesthetics.

What is the beautiful? It is to be limited to aesthetic value, and may be defined as successful expression, or, better, expression *simpliciter*, for expression that is unsuccessful simply is not expression. Unsuccessful expression is the ugly. Nothing, however, can be completely ugly; for the contradiction between the beautiful and the ugly arises through war between aesthetic activity and impeded aesthetic activity. The ugly is disvalue, not non-value, or an opposing value. There are, therefore, degrees of ugliness, from that which by a hairbreadth has failed, as expression, to that which has dismally failed. Croce denies, however, such degrees of beauty; for either we have that which is expressive or we have that which is not. It is as impossible to be more or less expressive as it is to be more or less apposite. Either there is expression, either there is appositeness, or there is not.<sup>1</sup>

One must be careful to distinguish between aesthetic pleasure that is mixed with pleasures arising from extraneous facts, and purely aesthetic pleasure. The artist provides an example of purely aesthetic pleasure during the moment in which he intuits his work

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, § 34, p. 79 ff.

for the first time and his face is irradiated with what Croce calls "the divine joy of the creator". But a man may go to the theatre after a hard day at business and enjoy a complicated mixture of pleasures accompanied by a moment of true aesthetic pleasure. The artist himself may enjoy, after his intuition is over, a series of pleasures connected with the work of art, but not at all aesthetic. He may enjoy, for example, the pleasure of economic or moral achievement. These pleasures are quite irrelevant to the aesthetic fact, although they may legitimately accompany it.

### § 22. *Aesthetic Hedonism (Estetica, c. II)*

As Croce opposes hedonism in general, that is, the theory that reduces the four forms of activity to one, the economic, and is based on the pleasure and pain intrinsic to that form, so he opposes aesthetic hedonism in particular, which looks upon the aesthetic activity as a simple fact of pleasure. This distinction is important, for an aesthetic hedonist in this sense might not be, for instance, an ethical hedonist. Croce regards definitions of beauty such as that of Aquinas, *id quod visum placet*, as unacceptable on this account, although he admits that it was inevitable in the unsophisticated state of aesthetics in mediaeval times that they should be so inadequate. The theory of *play* is another form of aesthetic hedonism. The word "play" (*gioco*) implies the pleasure that arises from the expenditure of the exuberant energy of the organism, that is, from a practical act. So, in this theory, every game has been called an aesthetic fact. Art, like science, can thus be made part of a game; but morality cannot be produced by the intention of playing — on the contrary, it dominates the very act of playing.

The attempt by some modern aestheticians to explain the pleasure of art in sexual terms is a failure. There *are* poets who adorn themselves with their poetry as cocks with their crests and turkeys with their tails; but to the extent that a poet does this he is not a poet, but "a poor devil of a cock or turkey". To explain the fact of art by the desire for sexual victory is as absurd as to explain it by the desire to make money, on the ground that some poets have been paid for their poetry.

Aesthetics has been considered, too, as essentially connected with that with which we sympathize and by which we are attracted ; but the sympathetic is nothing but the image of what pleases, and as such is a complex fact, resulting not only from the aesthetic element, but from a variable element, namely, the pleasing in its infinite forms, arising from all classes of value. But the image of pain and wickedness can be beautiful as well as that of pleasure or goodness. There could, however, be a science of the sympathetic if, unlike aesthetics, it were not a complex fact ; and one could find here the origin of the connection between content and form.

To regard art as simply hedonistic it is necessary to put it within a philosophical framework that is simply hedonistic and admits no other kind of value. Where philosophy admits values such as truth or morality, it at once asks questions such as, " What are we to do with art ? " and " To what extent are we to allow it a free course ? " From such premisses there are two solutions : (a) a rigorous one which, regarding art as an inebriation of the senses, asserts that it is not only useless but harmful, and ought to be driven out by the mind that it troubles, and (b) a pedagogic one, admitting art to the extent to which it concurs with the end of truth or morality.

Finally, Croce admits the cry for " pure beauty " only if by this is meant that art is not to be confounded with sensual pleasure or morality. If by " pure beauty " is meant something unknown to our world, something he calls " mystical and transcendental ", something alleged to be purified of expression, that is, separated from itself, he declines to recognize any meaning in the term.

### § 23. *Pseudo-Aesthetic Conceptions (Estetica, c. 12)*

According to Croce, for whom beauty is simply expression, and ugliness the failure to express, there is no place in aesthetics for such terms as the tragic, the comic, the sublime, the graceful, the idyllic, the disgusting, the dreadful, or the ingenuous. These terms may find a place in the no-man's-land invented by pseudo-aesthetics and supposed to lie between the beautiful (*i.e.* the sympathetic) and the ugly (*i.e.* the antipathetic). Such pseudo-aesthetics attempted to discover how the ugly could be admitted in art as a foil to the

beautiful. If it be asked, then, which department of philosophy is to shelter these concepts, Croce answers "none", because he regards them as without philosophical value, and relegates them to psychology, as the naturalistic discipline that interests itself more and more in mere description. They bear no relation to the artistic fact except that in designating the material of life they may be the material for art, and also that aesthetic facts may quite possibly enter into the processes they describe — although in this case the process is still external to the aesthetic fact. The Dantesque *Farinata*<sup>1</sup> is to be judged aesthetically as beautiful simply. That he may appear also sublime is due to some external circumstance, such as the force of will he manifests, or the energy of Dante's technique. But these circumstances are as irrelevant to aesthetics as the fact that he was an Italian.

§ 24. *The "Physically Beautiful" (Estetica, c. 13)*

Although aesthetic activity is distinct from practical activity, it is always accompanied by practical activity, by the fact that it expresses itself. In common speech, the words of a poet and the notes of a musician are called expression; but so also are the blushes of shame, the pallor of fear, and the smile of cheerfulness. A certain temperature may be said to be the expression of a fever; and a certain rate of exchange may even be said to be the expression of a nation's bankruptcy. None of these phenomena are expression in the aesthetic sense, and many of them are separated from it by an abyss.

The whole wider process of aesthetic production can be symbolized in four steps: (a) impressions; (b) expression, or the aesthetic synthesis; (c) hedonistic accompaniment, or the pleasure connected with the beautiful; and (d) the translation of the aesthetic fact into physical phenomena. The only one that is strictly aesthetic is (b). There are, however, physical stimulants of reproduction, that is, what may be called, in physical terms, movements that have been isolated and in some way made permanent. Such are pictures, statues, and symphonies. If these be designated by (e), then the

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, c. 6, l. 79; c. 10, l. 32.

process of reproduction will take place in this order : (e) ; (d) — (b) ; (c). And if the physiological organism, the monument of art, be destroyed, and with it our memory, then the aesthetic wealth that was produced goes with it. Such monuments are called beautiful ; but, strictly, there is no such thing as physical beauty, because beauty is a fact that belongs, not to things, but to the activity of mind. Nevertheless, if we keep in our minds the fact that we are speaking elliptically, we may, for the sake of brevity, speak of the physically beautiful.

It is the physically beautiful that artists usually have had in mind when they have considered the question of the relation of form to content. They have meant by content the internal fact or expression, which Croce would call form ; and they have meant by form the monument of art, which Croce would call neither form nor content, although it may be part of the content, or joined to it, as we have seen in the preceding paragraph. It is physical beauty that has also been divided into natural and artificial beauty. Natural objects, such as trees and deer, are not beautiful to botanists and zoologists as such, because natural beauty must be discovered. Croce insists that there is nothing in nature that is inherently beautiful, even speaking elliptically, and that as the scene that stimulates the artist may be to many merely the cause of a comfortable sensation of resting the eye on verdure and bathing the body in sunlight, it is to be regarded, at the best, as merely one of the stimuli to aesthetic activity. It is in this way different from the monument of art, which — as (e) in the foregoing account — has at least an inherent relation to beauty, and is, by virtue of this relationship, more efficacious for aesthetic purposes.<sup>1</sup>

We must distinguish from monuments of art that which Croce calls writings (*scrittura*), such as alphabets, musical notes, and pseudo-languages such as the language of flowers. One may learn by practice to hear an opera by reading the musical score, without any external auditory aid. But the score is a more indirect physical stimulant to the aesthetic activity than (e), the sung opera. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Estetica*, c. 13, p. 117: “Il bello artificiale, foggiato dall’uomo, è aiuto ben più duttile ed efficace”. In the conclusion to our examination of Croce (*infra*, § 37) we consider this question critically.



important to observe this, because certain objects do acquire this function of indirect stimulus, and are, strictly, entitled to be called beautiful in as true a sense as any other physical object, although to a lesser degree. I may even know the *Commedia* so thoroughly that the sight of my prized copy of it may stimulate in me the aesthetic activity almost as well as the re-reading of it. This would be a Herculean feat, and it is likely that I should be deceiving myself ; but with less formidable works it would be more possible.

On the question of works that serve a double purpose, aesthetic and extra-aesthetic, such as structures of architecture, it has been held that these are aesthetically limited by the fact that they have an extra-aesthetic purpose ; but Croce points out that precisely because this purpose is external, it does not limit the aesthetic activity at all. Churches and cottages and barracks and ploughs are beautiful to the extent to which they express the purpose for which they were made. Croce admits, however, that certain consumable things, so well adapted to their purpose, are nevertheless so beautiful that people sometimes hesitate to use them. He cites the example of Frederick William of Prussia, who hesitated to use his magnificent grenadiers for war, although his son, Frederick the Great, obtained excellent service from them.

### § 25. *The Confusion between Physics and Aesthetics* (*Estetica*, c. 14)

That form of associationism which identifies the aesthetic fact with the association of two images, the image of the work of art (*e*) and the image of the meaning of the work of art, is based on error ; for the physical fact does not enter the mind as an image, but causes the reproduction of the image — the only image that is the aesthetic fact — by its blindly stimulating the mind and producing an impression.<sup>1</sup>

Associationism inevitably destroys the unity of the aesthetic fact. Aesthetic physics, or the philosophy of natural beauty, is shown in its absurdity when it is shown to require subdivision into

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 14, pp. 123-124. This crucially important point is considered later (*infra*, c. 4).

aesthetic mineralogy and aesthetic ornithology. Treatises that discourse on the beauty of the human body must be confronted with the question, "which sex, which race, which racial species, which age, which social breed, and which occupational class?" in order to arrive at the individual *questo qui*. A Russian lady sold her Neapolitan villa because she could not bear looking for ever at *une cuvette bleue*, the Bay of Naples, preferring, no doubt, the gloomy firs and clouds of the north. The theory that art imitates nature has sometimes been grounded on associationism. There are no physical facts to which beauty corresponds; and to seek laws in them is as absurd as seeking the laws of exchange in the physical nature of the currencies. Croce merrily dubs the search for such laws as the astrology of aesthetics, and ridicules it for taking a plebiscite to discover whether one envelope is more beautiful than another. A long, stiff, yellow envelope that would be very ugly as the container of a love-letter would be much more beautiful as the container of a writ than would a square, flimsy, perfumed envelope, which — in such a context — would express only impertinent sarcasm.

### § 26. *Externalization (Estetica, c. 15)*

We cannot will or not will our aesthetic vision; but we must will or not will to externalize it as record or communication. This volitional fact is preceded by a complex of various kinds of knowledge, known as techniques. There *are* such techniques; but they constitute knowledge used by the practical activity engaged in producing stimuli to aesthetic reproduction. They are not means of internal expression. There are no means of internal expression, because expression is a primary theoretic activity which cannot be illumined by any practical activity, though, on the other hand, the former may illumine the latter. Expression does not employ means, for it has not an end. It is indivisible into means and end. Croce warns against the wrong use of the word "technique", as when a novelist is said to have developed a new technique in writing fiction: in this case the so-called technique *is* the new novel. But it is legitimate, for instance, to use the word in discussing different methods of painting in oils. A dramatic technique may be said to

be impossible, but a theatrical technique possible ; for there are different processes used in externalizing the drama. We may say that the introduction of women to the Italian stage in the sixteenth century in place of men dressed as women was a new technique.

We do not externalize all the expressions that we intuit : we select from a crowd of intuitions, and the selection is largely governed by the economic conditions of life and its moral direction. When we have formed an intuition, it remains to be decided whether or not we shall communicate it, and if so, to whom, when, and how. All these considerations fall within the scope of the practical. Whether licences should be granted for the hawking of certain pictures in the street is a matter for the police, not for aesthetics. It is not an aesthetic question whether art may be employed for evil purposes alien from its essence, which is pure theoretical contemplation.

### § 27. *Taste (Estetica, c. 16)*

When the entire processes of aesthetic intuition and externalization have been completed, and there is a "work of art" fixed in definite physical material, what is the means of judging it ?

An individual A seeks the expression of an impression which he feels, or of which he has the presentiment, but has not yet expressed. He tries the combination *m*, but rejects it as unsuitable, that is, ugly, inexpressive. He tries *n*, with no better result. After several such vain attempts, he suddenly creates *e*, the sought-for expression, and his face is "irradiated with the divine joy of the creator". Now, another individual B desires to judge this expression, and decide whether or not it is beautiful. He must put himself at A's point of view, going through the whole process again, with the aid of the physical sign by which A has denoted the expression. If A has seen clearly, B, having placed himself at the same point of view, must necessarily see clearly too ; and if not, not. The philosophical possibility of A having a clear and B an obscure vision, or *vice versa*, is categorically denied by Croce. Mental activity, because it is activity, is not caprice, but a spiritual necessity, and can solve an aesthetic problem only in one way — the right one. So, if a "work of art" appear beautiful to the artist and ugly to the critic,

one can say nothing except that one of the two is wrong. As Don Quixote, having mended his helmet with cardboard, took care not to test it again, so an artist may deceive himself that his work is beautiful ; and other considerations may make him deceive himself that he has failed, causing him to undo his work and do it again worse, as Tasso did in the *Gerusalemme conquistata*. Critics may likewise err both ways.

The judicial activity that criticizes and recognizes the beautiful is identical with that which produces it. The former is called taste, the latter genius. These terms are substantially identical. The common observation that a critic should have some of the genius of the artist, and that the artist should have taste, exhibits this identity. But to speak of taste without genius or genius without taste is meaningless. We cannot judge what is extraneous to us. We cannot, it is true, raise ourselves to Dante's level when we criticize Dante, because empirically we are not Dante, nor Dante we ; but in the moment of judgment or contemplation our mind and that of the poet are one (*il nostro spirito è tutt' uno con quello del poeta*).<sup>1</sup> In this identity alone is the possibility that our little minds (*le nostre piccole anime*) can unite with great minds, and become great with them in the universality of mind (*nella universalità dello spirito*). Croce notes in passing that what is said of aesthetic judgment holds for every other judgment, such as the moral or scientific. We could make no moral judgment upon murder if the act of murder were wholly incomprehensible to us.

The criterion of taste is absolute, with the intuitive absoluteness of the imagination (*fantasia*) ; and so every act of expressive activity will be recognized as beautiful. But its absoluteness is different from that of the intellect, which is developed by reason. If the absolute nature of the imagination were denied, we should have to deny also that of the intellect, and, implicitly, that of morality. As morality presupposes logical distinctions, so logic cannot make them without expression, that is, without imaginative form. Nevertheless, there is a variety of logical and ethical judgments, and a greater variety of aesthetic ones. When Croce previously discussed the stimuli of reproduction, he indicated cautiously that there

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 16, p. 142 ; cf. *infra*, § 35, p. 84 ff.

was reproduction *if all the other conditions remained equal*. But they do not ; for both the physical stimulus and the psychological conditions by means of which an impression is supposed to be reproduced several times are continually changing. Paintings darken ; statues become mutilated ; texts become corrupt ; and, apart from loss of sight or hearing, there are perpetual and inevitable changes, not only of society, but of our own internal psychological make-up. Even if the Madonna of Cimabue had not darkened by time in the Chiesa di Santa Maria Novella, she would still make a different impression on even the best-informed spectator of today from that which she made upon a thirteenth-century Florentine. " Works of art " produce no effects except on minds prepared to receive them. But to the extent to which we do replace ourselves in the conditions in which the " physical beauty " was produced (and this we do often, and to a considerable degree) the reproduction occurs. Restoration, therefore, although so disastrous when ill-informed, is often very valuable ; and so also, although it may likewise produce palimpsests — new expressions imposed upon old ones, is historical interpretation.

### § 28. *The History of Literature and Art (Estetica, c. 17)*

Croce values highly the function fulfilled by historical research in connection with literature and art. Without it nearly all works of art would be irrevocably lost, and we should be little better than beasts, immersed, at most, in the very recent past. Learning alone, of course, is quite inadequate ; but to the gifted ignoramus the greatest works of art are inaccessible. One must, however, distinguish between the history of art and historical research that makes use of works of art for extraneous purposes.

In an interesting excursus on the question of progress, Croce notes that the criterion in literary and artistic activity assumes a form different from that which it assumes, or is believed to assume, in the history of science. If the history of aesthetic products shows progressive cycles, each cycle has its own problem, and is progressive only in respect of that problem. For example, there may be said to be progress in the elaboration of the mode of using the subject-

matter of chivalry, during the Italian Renaissance, from Pulci to Ariosto. After Ariosto there was only repetition or imitation, diminution or exaggeration — in short, decadence. Progress begins with the commencement of a new cycle, of which the openly and consciously ironical Cervantes is an instance. The decadence of Italian literature at the end of the *cinquecento* consisted simply in having nothing more to say. Shakespeare does not represent a progress as regards Dante, nor Goethe as regards Shakespeare, although Dante does represent progress as regards mediæval visionaries, Shakespeare as regards Elizabethan dramatists, and Goethe as regards writers of *Sturm und Drang*. But it is quite erroneous to talk of the infancy of Italian art in Giotto and its maturity in Raphael ; for here no comparison is possible. There is no such thing as an aesthetic progress of humanity ; for the art of the savage, if correlative to the impressions of the savage, is not inferior to that of Italy or France ; and an ever-increasing accumulation of our historical knowledge makes us sympathize with all the artistic products of all peoples, and makes our taste more catholic (*allarga il nostro gusto*). We are not more mentally alert than the contemporaries of Pericles ; but we are richer, in that we dominate a larger portion of the universe with our theoretic and practical activity.

### § 29. *The Identity of Linguistics and Aesthetics (Estetica, c. 18)*

If what linguistics contains is reducible to philosophy, it is identical with aesthetics. Expression is an indivisible whole. Grammar is an empirical discipline — a collection of groups useful for learning languages — and without any claim to philosophical truth. Languages have no reality beyond the propositions and complexes of propositions really written and pronounced by given peoples for definite periods. That is, they have no existence outside the “works of art” in which they concretely exist. On the other hand, vowels and consonants are not facts of language, but simple physical concepts of sounds. A vocabulary, says Croce, is a cemetery, containing more or less well-embalmed corpses. That is, it is a collection of abstractions. Language is perpetual creation. To

seek the model language is to seek the immobility of motion. The social need for a better understanding amongst peoples can be satisfied only by universal culture and the interchange of thought. The reality of language lies not in isolated words, but in discourse among expressive organisms, rationally indivisible.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE *ESTETICA*

#### § 30. *Croce's Standpoint*

MR. CARRITT's observation that the method of the *Estetica* is too brilliantly cursory to be conciliating<sup>1</sup> expresses the general impression one has on reading it, especially for the first time; but Croce's place as an aesthetician is without equal. No-one before him had succeeded in any comparable degree in isolating the aesthetic fact. Most writers on aesthetics who were not simply art critics had been metaphysicians or moralists, who had tried to find a place for art after they had constructed philosophical systems which ignored it; and some of the greatest of them, anxious to do it justice, had produced erudite but unconvincing results. Croce, on the other hand, was attracted to philosophy by the interest in art and letters which his ample endowment of wealth enabled him to pursue unhampered by professional distractions; and the first problem that confronted him was that of aesthetics. Instead of making it an appendix to philosophy, he made it the introduction; and so, we believe with him, he found its true exaltation and independence as the ground of the rest of philosophy. One is not surprised to find, therefore, that the authority just quoted introduces his observation by saying, "I believe that a greater amount of truth is contained in Croce's *Estetica* than in any other philosophy of beauty that I have read".<sup>2</sup>

Croce is a Hegelian only in the sense of having been acclimatized to the Hegelian tradition, and of having made Hegel often the point of his departure. The *Estetica*, though not the whole *filosofia dello spirito*, is consciously anti-Hegelian. For Croce, philosophy is the study of the concrete, and science that of the abstract. He calls his philosophy the philosophy of mind, viewing mind as reality. But he is not simply an idealist saying that *esse* is *percipi*, or that

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Carritt, *The Theory of Beauty*, c. 12, 1, 1 (p. 281).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*



mind makes nature, or that the rational is the actual ; for he says rather that every form that reality assumes for us has its ground within mind. Mind is an activity whose forms, and their order and relation, we may distinguish but not separate. Art for Croce, as for Hegel, and to some extent for Kant, is a form of knowledge belonging to our theoretical rather than to our practical side.

It is within this framework that Croce proclaims his characteristic doctrine that beauty, the aesthetic fact, is expression, which is identical with intuition, the mental activity that is the ground, as we have seen, for all other forms of mental activity.

### § 31. *That which is Intuited*

We saw in our account of the first chapter of the *Estetica*<sup>1</sup> that matter is attacked and conquered by form ; and that this matter is experienced although not produced by mind. And in examining the second chapter we observed that we cannot have an intuition of an intuition, nor an expression of an expression, and that, although the aesthetic fact consists in the form alone, the form cannot leave its abstraction without matter.<sup>2</sup>

If Croce were asked what, then, is this matter, he might reply that he could not tell, because he cannot know it till it becomes knowable by intuition. He warns us that in aesthetics form and matter are to be regarded as an indivisible unity, and not as the bottle and the water the bottle contains.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, he does say that while the concept is, for example, of water in general, the intuition is of this river, or this lake, or this raindrop.<sup>4</sup> But Croce recognizes that in becoming aware of this river or this lake or this raindrop we have already given it form. It is not what it was before we did so. So we are better informed when he tells us that that which we intuit before we intuit it is sensation, that complex, non-cognitive, and passive state of our passions. My intuition tells me only what I experience, suffer, or desire.<sup>5</sup> That which I intuit before I intuit it is, as we saw,<sup>6</sup> *l'emozionalità non elaborata estetica-*

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 12, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Problemi*, I, c. 1, p. 21 (ed. Bari, 1910)

<sup>5</sup> *Logica*, part 2, c. 3, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 48 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Estetica*, c. 3, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 48.

*mente*. It is our own propensities, one of the infinite gradations of what Croce calls our practical activity. Aristotle had a glimpse of this doctrine in his famous passage *περὶ καθάρσεως*; and aestheticians from Aristotle onwards have groped after a clearer understanding of his cathartic theory. Hegel, for instance, in asserting that the end of art lies in its capacity and function of mitigating the passions,<sup>1</sup> explains that an artist, overtaken by grief, can mitigate the intensity of his private feeling by the expression (*Darstellung*) of it; and that while even the physical relief of tears, for example, may comfort him, much greater is the relief by expression (*aussprechen*) of inner feeling in words, forms, tones, and shapes. Spinoza's dictum, that to perceive and know our passions makes us less enslaved to them,<sup>2</sup> is in the same train of thought. Instead of staggering under the weight of our emotions, we press forward more buoyantly by reason of our aesthetic activity. When aestheticians have spoken of art as liberating us from emotion, it has usually been in this way that, although often dimly, they have envisaged the process. What they have conceived emotion or sensation to be has been determined by their general philosophical outlook. If it belongs to the mind itself, it needs only the mind to account for it, and there is then no reason to suppose that any material world exists. If it enters the mind from without, it would seem that the mind into which it enters is not a mind of the sort posited by the kind of idealism that Croce expounds. Idealism, however, may mean many very different things by "mind". To Plato, for instance, the finite mind is not in its nature alien from the ideas it is able to comprehend; but to Berkeley the so-called order of the universe is itself a product of that one mind that is the source of all others. It is not our business here to raise the vast problem that is in question. We have endeavoured to ascertain what, according to Croce, that which we intuit is before we intuit it. We find that it is this content,

<sup>1</sup> *Asthetik (Einleitung)*, 3 (in *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart, 1927, vol. 12, p. 80 ff.): Hegel speaks of our release by art from our immediate sunkenness in a feeling — *aus der unmittelbaren Befangenheit in einer Empfindung* (*op. cit.*, loc. cit. p. 81). On catharsis cf. Brémond, *Prière et poésie* (cc. 3, 16, 17).

<sup>2</sup> *Ethics*, part 5, schol. to prop. 4: "omnes appetitus seu cupiditates eatenus tantum passionibus sunt, quatenus ex ideis inadæquatis oriuntur; atque eadem virtuti accensentur, quando ab ideis adæquatis excitantur vel generantur". (*Opera*, ed. The Hague, 1895, vol. 1, p. 244.)

this sensation, this *emozionabilità non elaborata esteticamente* to which Croce refers as if it were the rough material of mind, but whose existence he does not satisfactorily account for, because on such questions he is avowedly agnostic. When most consistent with his own cardinal doctrines, Croce rigidly abstains from any speculations about supposed realities that transcend experience. Primal origins and ultimate ends do not interest him. That which we intuit before we intuit it is that which we do not know. How can we know that which we do not know? "Philosophy," he tells us, "as the science of mind, cannot be philosophy of the intuitive datum; nor, as we have seen, philosophy of history, nor philosophy of nature; and therefore a philosophical science of that which is not form and universal, but material and particular, cannot be conceived. This amounts to affirming the impossibility of metaphysics."<sup>1</sup> Here Croce makes his position admirably clear. Nevertheless, the unknown matter without assails us in such a manner as to make one intuition different from another intuition. We do not produce it. It is *materia bruta*, and unknown darkness. Croce insists that as it is not within our experience we cannot possibly discuss it in the philosophy of mind. We shall have more to say on this later.<sup>2</sup>

### § 32. *The Identity of Intuition, Expression, Art, and Beauty*

To Croce, there is no distinction amongst any of the terms, art, beauty, intuition, expression. When one is there, all are there. When one is absent, all are absent. He might admit, perhaps, that they represent the same fact looked at in different ways, like the "front" and "back" of a two-dimensional figure; but he could allow no real distinction.

We must note certain terminological usages. Croce does not, for instance, identify intuition with perception. Intuition does not care whether its objects exist or not. It does not in any way define them. Perception, on the other hand, is not pure intuition, but a judgment.<sup>3</sup> Art is not concerned with any criterion of reality, which, for Croce,

<sup>1</sup> *Estetica*, c. 8, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, c. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Problemi*, I, c. I, p. 26; *infra*, § 41, p. 101 ff. The importance of this distinction for an understanding of Croce can hardly be overestimated.

is the distinction between desire and action — action is reality, and desire possibility.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, moreover, to speak of physical beauty is to Croce to speak elliptically — the beauty we see in Murillo's *Immaculate Conception* lies not in the line or the pigments of the picture that the Louvre has indexed as 1709 S, but in the mind of Murillo, and in ours. Likewise, we may call it a "work of art" to save ourselves the trouble of stating philosophically its relationship to the true work of art that took place in Murillo's mind as the intuition that was expressed, and that, being so expressed, was beautiful, as it is to us when we are confronted by the picture, and thereby have an intuition.<sup>2</sup> But art, in the Crocean sense, is knowledge — that form of knowledge upon which all knowledge is grounded. It is activity, but not activity in the general sense, which usually means what Croce would call "practical" as opposed to "theoretical" activity. To be aware of the shape of the Madonna in Murillo's picture, to be aware of its colour, is the same as being aware of one's own state of mind.<sup>3</sup> Croce will inquire no further, metaphysically: by imagination (*fantasia*) we translate practical values into theoretical ones, states of mind into imagery. But Croce distinguishes between this imagination (*fantasia*) and rhetorical fancy (*immaginazione*), which is a construction, a mere mechanical device arbitrarily connecting images together as, for instance, when a child cuts off and transposes the heads of Sinbad and Miss Muffet. The whole *Estetica* is based upon the genuine communicability of intuition as truth, in the sense of being true knowledge. Both fancy (*immaginazione*) and perception are constructions which supersede intuitions. When the artist touches up a photograph,<sup>4</sup> he is not going forward from perception to intuition: he is getting back from perception to an intuition. So the child whose fancy runs riot amongst the heroes of the nursery may have an intuition, not by working forward from fancy (*immagina-*

<sup>1</sup> *Pratica*, part 1, section 2, c. 6, p. 185 (ed. Bari, 1909).

<sup>2</sup> This example is not chosen at random. In the Louvre, this famous picture looks almost mediocre: the draperies lack texture, the face lacks shadows, and the hands are chalky. Murillo evidently intended it to be seen by candlelight from an altar below, when the intuition intended to be communicated would be made at once available.

<sup>3</sup> *Logica*, part 1, section 3, c. 2, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> *Estetica*, c. 2, p. 20.

zione), but by working back from it to true imagination (*fantasia*), which is the realm of intuition. When, in the *Breviario*,<sup>1</sup> Croce later speaks of the distinction between fancy (*immaginazione*) and imagination (*fantasia*) as a somewhat artificial creation of the nineteenth century, to take the place of the conception of the work of art as *simplex et unum*, or of the "unity in variety" of the old Poetics, it is because in this later work he is concerned to deny the existence of image-atoms (*immagini-atomi*) — just as he denies thought-atoms (*pensieri-atomi*) — and to assert that what is called an image is always a nexus of images.<sup>2</sup> When this nexus of images is organic, there is intuition; when it is mechanical, for some practical purpose, as in fancy (*immaginazione*), there is not. Intuition is always lyrical. Indeed "lyricism" is another term that may be added to the terms that the title of this section identifies, and also identified with them as synonymous.

✧ Critics of the *Eстетика* have viewed with especial suspicion Croce's identification of intuition and expression. But as an account of the aesthetic process in an individual mind, it is at least tenable, if we inquire no further into the question, and keep in view Croce's insistence on the internal character of expression, which can take place without any external manifestation at all. Since I express by intuiting and intuit by expressing, it is indeed hard to see how it could be said that any distinction of the slightest importance lay between these terms. It is as if one were to affirm that being at war is an internal fact which emerges in hating, externalized by the practical activity of firing at the bodies of an enemy, and then go on to identify hate with being at war. In such a usage of the terms, the most that can be said to distinguish them is that perhaps one term emphasizes one aspect of the process more than another. Beyond that there is no valid distinction at all.

The difficulty — and it is a most serious one — arises when, having accepted this identification of intuition and expression, we proceed to inquire how we communicate aesthetic experience. It is no doubt quite satisfactory, from the standpoint of an individual, simply to deny any distinction between the terms; but Croce, we

<sup>1</sup> *Breviario*, c. I, pp. 31-34 (4<sup>a</sup> ed., Bari, 1928).

<sup>2</sup> *Breviario*, c. I, p. 38.

need hardly be reminded, insists on the possibility of the communication of aesthetic experience.

### § 33. *The Communication of Aesthetic Experience*

Having enjoyed an intuition/expression during a walk late in the evening, I choose to record it by constructing, with the help of brushes, paints, and canvas, a certain physical object which I hang on a wall and describe as "Moonlight". I do this not only to assist me on some future occasion to have a similar activity, but in order that certain other persons whom I desire to have a similar experience should in fact have it. But how, in Croce's system, is any one of these persons to become aware of the existence of the physical object that I have hung on the wall and called "Moonlight"? Croce is quite agnostic about the existence of this physical object apart from mind, while apparently allowing that it is possible for me to use it as a medium for the communication of aesthetic experience. In any case, even if this initial difficulty can be surmounted, and my friend become aware of the physical object labelled "Moonlight", it cannot in itself be the impression or content of an intuition/expression in his mind; for, like Hume, Croce uses the word "impression" not as denoting an external impressing cause, but as something in the mind of the person who makes use of it in the aesthetic activity, that is, gives it form. To admit the possibility of intuiting external or physical nature is regarded by Croce as suicidal to philosophy; but even if we do grant to the physical object at least sufficient existence to be a vehicle for the transmission of intuitions/expressions, it is in vain; for the impression to which my friend gives form is in his own mind, and consists of some crude, unkempt, emotional, or volitional state. In other words, even if I can succeed in depositing my intuition for future reference, by admitting sufficient existence to the picture "Moonlight" to enable it to perform the function of "holding" my intuition/expression until I have occasion to see it again, it can do this only for me. When my friends come in and look at "Moonlight", they may, it is true, have intuitions/expressions, and even use my picture for depositing their several intuitions/expressions for their future

reference ; but, since it is in any case not the picture at all, but one's own state of mind which is the impressing cause, I have no reason to suppose that my friends' intuitions/expressions are quite similar to mine. Croce might say that my faculty of expression is the same as my friends' faculties of expression ; but this is not enough ; for he admits that the crude state of mind that is the impression may differ widely.

But let us now suppose that somehow we have overcome not only the initial difficulty that the physical object "Moonlight" has no existence, but also the second difficulty that, even if it be accorded sufficient existence to record my intuition/expression, my impression may be other than that of my friends. Let us suppose, indeed, that I have recorded my intuition/expression in "Moonlight", and that when my friends and I return to this picture together we shall all have similar impressions. There is still a third difficulty. It does not follow, according to Croce, that from the same impression we shall each have the same intuition/expression ; for, as we have seen in our account of the *Estetica*,<sup>1</sup> there is no passage between content and form.<sup>2</sup> Croce's only reason for making this assertion must surely be his avowed agnosticism about the nature of the content. As he says immediately afterwards, "we know nothing of its nature". If, then, there is "no passage" from the impression to the intuition/expression, we have no assurance that, even if we should have the same impression, we should give it the same form, that is, have the same intuition/expression. I may put my hand, so to speak, into the darkness of an unknown and unknowable room, and extract from it an intuition/expression ; but even if my friends and I can somehow identify this room and also our own expressive faculty, they may very well extract a different intuition/expression from mine.

On the whole question of the content or impression, Croce's agnosticism presents intolerable difficulties. Probably the attempt to preserve it is the source of some inconsistencies in his own writings. In one place<sup>3</sup> he will suppose that sensation or matter not

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Estetica*, c. 2, p. 19 : "Dalle qualità del contenuto a quella della forma non vi è passaggio".

<sup>3</sup> *E.g. op. cit.* c. 1, p. 8.

only exists, but is a necessary condition for human knowledge and activity : without it there can be no knowledge or human activity. In another <sup>1</sup> he will deny that any such matter really does exist, while still saying that, non-existent as it may be, it is still, as a "limit", responsible for differentiating one intuition from another. And in a further place <sup>2</sup> he will assert that our volitions, which are the matter or content of our intuitions, *are* reality. It would seem that Croce is most consistent with his own philosophy, and on his safest ground, when, instead of saying anything about the nature of this matter at all, he says simply that he does not profess to know what it is — that he is agnostic about it. But he is by no means content to allow the question to rest there ; for he insists again and again that it is a most vulgar error to suppose that one can intuit something impressed from a supposed external reality and something emerging from inside the intuiting mind. He derides as false and mystico-romantic any suggestion that there is anything inherent in physical objects that make them even tend to elicit intuitions/expressions of a particular kind. He denies that there is any connection between "Moonlight" and either my friends or myself, except what each of us happens to put there.

In this we cannot follow Croce ; for, as we have tried to show, his own belief in the essential communicability of aesthetic experience would seem to fall by it. From the point of intuition/expression "upwards", we are content, in the main, with his account of experience. That is to say, we accept his doctrine of the four moments or grades of mind, and the relationships that he establishes amongst them in the *Estetica*. We note also his warnings against falsely reposing confidence in an objective reality in physical objects, since beauty is by definition an activity of mind ; and we regard these warnings as a welcome safeguard against a dangerous and frequent error. But, however well satisfied we may be with his account of the activity of mind, we reject as quite unacceptable his excursions into the realm of that content or impression or sensation that he posits as a limit. About it he ought not, on his own premisses, to say anything at all ; for he denies the possibility of knowing it.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g. Problemi*, 8, c. 3, p. 481.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g. Pratica*, part I, section 3, p. 205.



The questions we have raised in this section cannot be indefinitely dismissed ; for without positing some means of contact, some means of " passage ", no communication of aesthetic experience can be assured. The " work of art ", painted canvas, book of verse, cathedral spire, is fashioned by an artist in vain to the extent to which it is fashioned for the purpose of communicating a specific intuition. This is one of the most important problems we shall have to try to solve.<sup>1</sup> It may be that, having solved it, we can come to terms with Croce to some extent. In the meantime we shall see whether we must put further limits on our allegiance to his aesthetic.

### § 34. *Degrees of Beauty and of Expression ; and the Problem of Ugliness*

Here we arrive at some other crucial points of interpretation and criticism. Croce, in reducing the aesthetic fact to expression, has erased such distinctions as sublimity, prettiness and stateliness, as also romantic and classic, lyric and epic. Where there is expression there is beauty, and all the things that are meant by such terms as sublime, classic, and pretty, to exactly the extent required by the situation. It may be convenient to dub a work as classic or romantic or pretty or grand ; but to do so is to employ an artificial classification — almost as if we were to catalogue statues as marble or bronze, or poetry as French or German. We are well satisfied with Croce's effacement of these terms as philosophical or quasi-philosophical ; but when he goes on to assert that there are no degrees of expression, but that every expression is perfect in itself,<sup>2</sup> we suspect that Croce, like most discoverers of a new vantage-point in thought, goes too far. He admits degrees of ugliness ; for the ugly is unsuccessful attempt at expression ; and, while one may fail in an examination with varying degrees of ignominy, one can succeed in only one way, Croce seems to argue, namely, by passing it. He is willing, it is true, to allow for differences of extension in art. Shakespeare achieved perfect expression both in *Hamlet* and in *Under the Greenwood Tree* ; but the former, as the expression of a more complex impression, is differentiated from *Under the Greenwood Tree* by its

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, c. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Estetica*, c. 10, pp. 91-95.

greater extension. This difference is quite inescapable ; for otherwise one of Hamlet's speeches would be philosophically indistinguishable from the play itself, and the line "Come hither, come hither, come hither" might be as great as the poem in which it occurs. It is, however, still true that Croce insists that all expression is perfect, however simple or complex the impression to which it gives form. Mr. Carritt and other commentators on Croce dissent from the view that while there may be degrees of ugliness (*i.e.* of aesthetic failure) there can be no degrees of beauty (*i.e.* of aesthetic success). Mr. Carritt, for instance,<sup>1</sup> points to the passage in the *Estetica*<sup>2</sup> in which Croce explains how, when an individual is confronted by various combinations of words surging up within him, he rejects this one and that until at last *lux facta est* and he achieves aesthetic success. How, asks Mr. Carritt, can the ugly, that is, inexpressive, aesthetically unsuccessful, combinations be known at all, if only that to which form is given, that is, the beautiful, the expressive, the aesthetically successful, can be known? Miss Bartlett also criticizes Croce on this score,<sup>3</sup> especially because he admits no qualitative difference between the aesthetic activity of the creator and that of the appreciator of a work of art.<sup>4</sup>

In the passage in question, Croce certainly lays himself open to attack. If, as he says, only the beautiful is expressive in any degree,

<sup>1</sup> *The Theory of Beauty*, c. 8, 3, s. 5 (pp. 215-217).

<sup>2</sup> *Estetica*, c. 16, pp. 139-140

<sup>3</sup> *Types of Aesthetic Judgment* (1937), p. 14, p. 30, and especially p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Miss Bartlett arranges aesthetic experience into a hierarchy of four types, according to what she calls their degree of aesthetic value, viz. (1) the "merely aesthetic", common to all experience that may be called aesthetic, (2) the "purely aesthetic appreciation of nature", such as one might have standing on the crest of a sand dune and suddenly beholding "a sweep of empty wet sand" and the "aching beauty of the sea", (3) appreciation of art, and (4) "the pure Impulsive Experience" peculiar to the creative artist.

"In all situations relevant for aesthetics", she writes (*op. cit.* p. 90), "there is something which can be called the 'aesthetic minimum', and which provides a principle of exclusion and inclusion. But this is not an adequate and sufficient explanation in every case, although it seems the only relevant factor in some, *i.e.* I am here differing from Croce, whose theory of beauty is that it is a universal which contains individuals but no species." But it seems to us that Miss Bartlett underestimates Croce's admission of differences of extension, to which we have just referred, which provides that the complexity of the nexus of images in an intuition may vary greatly.

and nothing that is beautiful is other than perfectly expressive, it follows that, as intuition/expression is the primary form of knowledge, we simply cannot know the ugly at all ; and every experience that we have must be beautiful. It might even be said that the ugly is by definition that which is not known and the beautiful that which is known ; but that is not in accordance with our experience.

To such objections we suppose that Croce would answer that we are here no longer in the realm of pure aesthetics. The kind of judgment that aestheticians generally call aesthetic frequently does not belong, in Croce's system, to the intuitive grade of mind, but emerges only after conceptual activity has taken place — as, we have seen, does perceptive judgment.<sup>1</sup> The activity that he describes in the case of the man struggling to get the right combination of words is not a simple aesthetic one, starting from scratch with the crude mass of unknown and unknowable impression. In such activity, the individual mind is occupied not so much in the simple act of drawing out the beautiful from the unknown mass of content or matter or sensation as in isolating it from other forms of mental activity. It is true, of course, that it is only from the mass of content or emotion that the intuition can be extracted ; but in getting an intuition we have not only to do that, but first of all to put back a vast network of other intuitions, and indeed mental activity of all modes, into the crucible of sensation or impression. We have seen how art can never be the intuition of an intuition, or the expression of an expression, but is always the expression of an impression.<sup>2</sup> The aesthetic fact, isolated as Croce has so admirably isolated it, appears a very simple thing : in fact, we are inclined at first to think it is too simple to have been truly accounted for. But it is, of course, simple only when so philosophically isolated. Existentially we find the whole process that we commonly call aesthetic is anything but simple ; but, although he is too concerned with isolating the fundamental character of the aesthetic fact to lay such stress on this, Croce is evidently well aware of the complexity of the total process ; for the aesthetic activity, as the lowest grade of mind, on which all other grades depend, has to work, so to speak, alongside of all the others.

<sup>1</sup> *Problemi*, I, c. 1, p. 26 ; *supra*, § 12, p. 46 ; § 32, p. 73 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Estetica*, c. 2, pp. 15-16 ; *supra*, § 13, p. 48.

For example, to write a book on ethics is to be engaged, *prima facie*, in conceptual activity ; but not only is it necessary for me when so occupied to have a background of aesthetic activity to support my concepts, but in the course of writing on ethics I may expect often to have to make moral judgments. In fact, every time that I think about ethical questions at all I put back into the crucible my own moral experience. Now, this complexity is conspicuously true of aesthetic activity, because it is the lowest and only independent grade, supporting all the others. In aesthetic activity we do not merely put our hand into the unknown darkness and draw forth an intuition. Presumably we should have done so in the first instant of our existence, when we were still innocent of all logical, economic, and moral activity, and — like Adam and Eve — knew not evil from good, knew not, conceptually, truth from error, but knew only our first intuition. In aesthetic activity we have not only to extract from the darkness, but to put back into the darkness and extract again and again. The most arduous part of the whole process necessary for aesthetic activity is this getting back to scratch. We must therefore distinguish, in Croce, between (*a*) the theoretic activity of the lowest grade, which we call aesthetic, and which is the basis of all experience, and (*b*) the whole complex aesthetic process which includes activity in all grades, and which is the regular antecedent in time of pure aesthetic intuition, that is, of (*a*).<sup>1</sup>

When we make the judgment, “this combination of words is ugly”, it would seem that we are still on our way *back* with a bunch of images which (by means of some complex activity within the process (*b*), such as we have just distinguished from pure aesthetic intuition) we have put together.<sup>2</sup> Under Croce’s system we cannot, it must be confessed, make the judgment “this is ugly” otherwise ; for we should not know it. Strictly, we have no aesthetic knowledge of the ugly, because this is philosophically impossible ; but we call objects ugly when we recognize them as symbolic of that which is impeding us from further aesthetic activity, and so from all further

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, § 41, p. 105 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. our discussion of imagination and fancy (*supra*, § 32, p. 74 f.) in which we tried to show that fancy, the artificial handling of images, was the more complex activity.

activity ; and, having then replaced our experience in the crucible, we try once again to bring forth a nexus of images in place of the jumbled collection which, in the general course of experience, we have artificially strung together. We might roughly illustrate this by the case of a person who, seeing a frog for the first time, shudders at the sight, calling it " hideous ", but who, in the course of subsequent zoological dissection of the animal, observes that, when microscopically examined, its parts have indeed beauty. It is possible for such a person thus to reconstruct a mental image of the frog, that is, have an intuition of it and call it beautiful. The frog no longer elicits a shudder : the sight of it may even be accompanied by considerable pleasure.

The fact remains that what Croce calls ugly is that which has not emerged as successful expression, that is, as expression. He even calls it that which has failed to come forward as expression. In view of this, his critics are justified in pointing out that, so far from being able to distinguish the degree of one such failure from another, one cannot possibly know it as failure, since there is no lower form of mind than the simple intuition. In the *Estetica*, Croce does not seem to have found any very sure footing for the problem of the ugly ; nor is he always consistent in his cardinal doctrine that expression is always perfect. In one passage he suggests that when we are deciding which intuitions/expressions we are to communicate, we select from a crowd of intuitions which are " at least sketched within us " (*almeno abbozzate interiormente*).<sup>1</sup> In passages such as this, Croce seems to hint that there is not a clear line between the known and the unknown such as is elsewhere insisted on in the *Estetica*. On the whole, he does not seem to be quite sure, in the *Estetica*, of his own position on this point. But his denial, in the later *Breviario*,<sup>2</sup> of the existence of image-atoms (*immagini-atomi*) makes it plain that at any rate he does not then treat the question in so facile a manner as he tended to do in the earlier work. The ugly would appear to be considered no longer as unsuccessful expression, as was at first supposed ; for, as Croce is well aware, even in the *Estetica*, there is, strictly, no such thing as unsuccessful expression, because all expression is successful ; but one must view it rather as a

<sup>1</sup> *Estetica*, c. 15, p. 137 ; cf. *supra*, p. 48, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Breviario*, c. 1, p. 38.

false construction *a posteriori*, succeeding the pure aesthetic grade of activity. So when we say "this picture is ugly", we mean that we are at present unable to resolve our experience in connection with it back to the darkness of content or sensation, and so have an intuition/ expression in regard to it. In other words, we mean not that we cannot get forward, or up, from a condition of passivity to the first grade of activity, but that we cannot get back, or down, from a complex activity, which has somehow stagnated or become petrified, to the zero line where activity can once again begin.

### § 35. *Expression and "Einfühlung"*

Probably the only serious rival to the Crocean aesthetic is the theory of *Einfühlung*, which, as it stands, is far from being adequate.

By his studies of optical illusions, Lipps arrived at the view that aesthetic pleasure consists of an enjoyment of our own activity *in an object*. In admiring the delicate grace of a minaret, we feel ourselves graceful in it. In beholding the might of Mont Blanc, we feel ourselves mighty in it. In following the flight of a swallow, we fly in it and with it. We enjoy an activity, according to this theory, to the extent to which it enables us to live in an object. But the *Einfühlung* doctrine needs very careful interpretation. It is not meaningful to say, as exponents of the theory sometimes do, that we can be active in any of these physical objects. When confronted by natural objects, such as a field of poppies, we cannot even figuratively be said to feel ourselves active in them, or to live in them emphatically. One cannot live in the Nelson Column, although one might possibly be said to live in the mind of the artist who designed it. How one is to do so without knowledge of his mind, which one can have only through the communication of his activity, is a problem we have yet to solve. But it is rather, as Lipps himself says,<sup>1</sup> that the blue sky seems to smile at me, when I delight in it, than that I smile at or about it. My apprehension of a suitable object immediately involves a tendency in me to a particular activity; but the distinction between myself and the object disappears or, rather, does not yet exist.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, vol. 4, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 1.

In a paper read to the Aristotelian Society, Professor Alexander said :

The story of Pygmalion, who fell in love with his own statue and prayed the Gods that it might live, is a true symbol of artistic creation. The marble lives, not in the sense that it has real life ; it is the fundamental illusion of art that its materials seem to possess characters which are foreign to them ; but in the sense that the marble assumes the form of life or spirit. For the copy represents its original in so far as its internal relations are identical with those of the original. . . . One thing is clear, that the imputed characters are not first imagined and then imputed ; the blending is immediate and what is imputed is experienced as belonging where it is imputed. . . . Properly speaking, empathy occurs where a mind is at one with another mind, like the spectator of a football match who feels himself present in the movements of the players without separating his own consciousness from that consciousness which he is observing.<sup>1</sup>

Here we catch sight of the fundamental truth of *Einfühlung*, that, properly speaking, it occurs where a *mind* is at one with another *mind*.

In criticizing *Einfühlung*, Miss Bartlett says <sup>2</sup> that the analogy it describes is proper not so much to aesthetic experience itself as to what she calls the kinaesthetic factor in art. In the technique employed by the artist working on his medium, there is necessarily a factor that may amount to inner mimicry, at least in some cases, as when a painter speaks, as Seurat did, of "hacking out" or "hollowing out" a canvas. But this is not aesthetic apprehension. It is a factor in the proper business of art, that is, in the technique of producing the physical symbol we commonly call a "work of art". In the aesthetic act, which we hold with Croce to consist of the intuition/expression, there may be, as Croce allows, this accompaniment. We may feel our body on the verge of following the movements of a dancer whom we are watching. While, however, this may be a concomitant factor in what is broadly called aesthetic experience, it is no more essential to it than the fact that, in delighting in the massive roundness of the dome of Saint Paul's, I experience

<sup>1</sup> S. Alexander, *Form and Subject Matter in Art*, Proc. Arist. Soc., New Series, vol. 37, 1936-1937, p. 119. Cf. *Beauty and Other Forms of Value*, p. 24 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Types of Aesthetic Judgment*, c. 5, p. 197 ff.

certain physiological incidents that cause me to have a feeling of massive roundness, nor the fact that a sudden glimpse of the campanile at Pisa makes me feel a little light-headed. This is all quite irrelevant to pure aesthetic intuition as such. A purely visual being, with no sense other than that of sight, presumably would not have any such concomitant experience, although no doubt he would be aware of what his point of view was, and could change it.

Perhaps, however, most artists, not being philosophers, and being asked to recount their experience in creating a work, would say that they had to "feel themselves into" their medium — sometimes almost literally wrestle with it — before and during the "birth" of the work. Grateful as they might be for intuitive glimpses they might enjoy while their medium was being moulded under their hand, they would claim no clear vision of what they were producing, even when the work was well in hand.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the *Einfühlung* theory does not distinguish between these physical and quasi-physical exertions ("inner mimicry" in a medium, as they have been called) and the true aesthetic activity which they do but accompany and may help to induce. Like criticism,<sup>2</sup> they may be a midwife, but not a mother to art. The muscular and visceral contortions of a sculptor may be a vital part of his technique; and it may even be that without them sculpture would become extinct; but we cannot admit that they are qualitatively different from the antics of a writer who occasionally finds the right phrase by chewing his pen, or from those of an orator who may sometimes find it by a gesture of his arm or a movement of his diaphragm.

It cannot be said, on the other hand, that such factors in technique are of no interest to aesthetics. On the contrary, as every artist knows, one must know something of the technique of coping with a particular medium in order to appreciate a work in that medium. But this is merely to say that it facilitates my aesthetic intuition as an appreciator of work in a particular medium to have

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Read quotes Picasso saying to M. Zervos, "Every time I begin a picture I feel as though I were throwing myself into the void. I never know if I shall fall on my feet again. It is only later that I begin to evaluate more exactly the result of my work" (*Art Now*, 1933, p. 123).

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 17, p. 54.



dealt with that medium myself. It would be difficult for me to appreciate, that is, have an intuition of, a Rembrandt, if I supposed it to have been produced by photography. Not only has the sculptor to "feel himself into his medium", but so also must I, although to a much lesser degree, in order fully to appreciate his work.

We have just seen that *Einfühlung* contains fundamental truth when interpreted as the activity of one mind *in another mind*. It is no doubt true that, when appreciating Gérard's *Napoléon le Grand* in the Musée de Versailles, I have a muscular tendency to draw myself to my full height and even stretch out my hand as if proudly holding the sceptre of France ; but the delight that accompanies my aesthetic intuition may be isolated as practical activity — as an act of will. If, as we must at present take for granted, there is communication between my mind and that of the artist, there was doubtless also communication between the artist's mind and that of Napoleon who stood out before him in this posture. The activity of Napoleon is thus somehow communicated to my mind ; and I, if I have an intuition/expression in looking at the picture, may be considered, according to the *Einfühlung* theory, as enjoying an activity that to some extent coincides with the activity of Napoleon's mind. It would seem to be possible, therefore, that, if we assume the existence of Napoleon's mind and that this is a true account of the communication of its activity to mine, I may be said to be in some way active in it. On the other hand, confronted by Modigliani's *Portrait of a Girl* or Shakespeare's *King Lear*, I cannot be said to delight in the mind of either of these personages, if they are fictitious ; but if I believe that I do, I am delighting in the minds of Modigliani and Shakespeare respectively, so that it is merely a question of mistaken identity.

*Einfühlung*, so interpreted, however, is not aesthetic activity at all, in Croce's meaning of "aesthetic" or, indeed, in any traditional meaning ; and Lipps himself insists that it is a striving or willing, a successful practical achievement.<sup>1</sup> The experience is not what Croce would call theoretic, but is practical or volitional. Moreover, if I delight in Napoleon's mind, Napoleon is presumably unaware of my activity ; but the activity, if it take place at all, need not

<sup>1</sup> *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, vol. 1, *Einfühlung*, pp. 185-204.

always be one-sided. It might be reciprocal, as in friendship, in which two persons may be said to delight in each other's minds. The whole question, however, depends on the possibility and nature of communication.

### § 36. *The Metaphysical Agnosticism of Croce*

If matter is experienced but not produced by mind,<sup>1</sup> and if form cannot leave its abstraction without it, where does matter come from? and what is it? We have already seen that when Croce is most consistent with his own philosophy he does not attempt to tell us. Nevertheless, we are not satisfied with such agnosticism, because we accept Croce's cardinal tenet that aesthetic experience is truly communicated from one mind to another only by intuitions/expressions being cast back into this *materia bruta* which always assails us in such a manner as to make one intuition different from another. When Croce says he is anti-metaphysical, he means that the speculations of metaphysics, by which it is hoped to distinguish a world of reality from a world of appearance, or mind from external nature, do not interest or concern him. For him there is no world of ideas and world of shadows, and no participation by sensory objects in mind, as there was for Plato. Croce's method of philosophy is immanent, not transcendent; and it is in being so completely immanent that it is so completely antithetical to the method of natural science. When Croce affirms the impossibility of metaphysics,<sup>2</sup> he is speaking from the point of view of his philosophy of mind, which asserts in effect that metaphysics is not philosophy at all. Croce professes to find in the philosophy of mind a study of reality in its concrete integrity, while in science he finds a study of reality in its abstractness. Philosophy of mind is the *scientia scientiarum* because, in studying reality in its concreteness, it studies the whole, while science, in studying it in its abstractness, studies only part of it. Even so, it will be remembered that, traditionally and etymologically, metaphysics is that which is beyond physics, that is, which transcends it. Merely to deny metaphysics is, from the standpoint of metaphysics, to defend a metaphysical theory.

<sup>1</sup> *Estetica*, c. 1, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* c. 8, p. 74.

As metaphysicians we may therefore say that, while accepting in general Croce's philosophy of mind, we do not necessarily accept his metaphysical theory. Before the time of Descartes there was a metaphysics that accepted not only the conception of a world outside mind, but an authority above or at least alongside of reason. Descartes and his successors acknowledged no authority other than reason ; but they never succeeded in abolishing the conception of a world outside mind without falling into solipsism. Croce cannot be said to have accomplished this further *dénouement* : he is merely agnostic here.

The activity of mind in its four moments, we are assured by Croce, is always the same. There is no difference between my activity and that of any other human mind. Our basic activity is that of intuition. But intuition itself seems to be grounded on something that is not known ; and it cannot be communicated without being first resolved into that unknown entity. As Croce believes that there is nothing real outside mind, he says that, although this something is unknown, it must be something within the mind ; for it is real, and only mind is real. It is the rough material, he tells us, of our passions ; but it is, indirectly, the rough material of all activity, aesthetic, conceptual, economic, and moral. The philosophy of mind can tell us nothing about it except that it is a necessary condition for the form to leave its abstraction. I have no reason to suppose that the content or rough material of my mind has any characteristic in common with that of other minds. On the contrary, it evidently has many characteristics not shared in common with those of other minds, and, moreover, is in itself always fluctuating. Croce is willing to believe that this flux does not matter in the least, because from the quality of the content to that of the form there is no passage. He says that the intuition consists of the form alone ; but even if we allow that it does and posit a fundamental identity between my intuitive activity and that of other minds, I may still be in the position of having to believe that my friends and I are engaged in the same kind of activity without being assured that we are truly communicating anything to one another, that is, without being assured that their aesthetic experience and mine are truly comparable beyond their being the same kind of activity. For Croce admits that

intuitions differ. They differ even within the same mind when confronted by a physical symbol at different times ; for what I saw in Correggio's *Notte* ten years ago may be very different from what I see in it today, although my activity in the situation, as in all aesthetic situations, is fundamentally the same. The content of my mind has apparently altered, so that, although I am still behaving in the same kind of way when confronted by *Notte*, I see a different picture, that is, I have a different aesthetic experience. In accepting, generally, the Crocean philosophy of mind as an account of my experience, I cannot truly explain even this fact satisfactorily without speculation about what appears to be a change in the unknown darkness of the content of my mind. Such speculation is, *a fortiori*, necessary in order to have any assurance that, when I record an intuition in a physical symbol, it is in fact thereby truly communicated to another individual. Otherwise we cannot tell what happens to that which is resolved into the unknown world of content and impression : anything, indeed, may happen, and so nothing be truly communicated.

We can hardly conclude this discussion without reference to the question in Kant's *Prolegomena* which it inevitably brings to mind. In answer to the question whether metaphysics is possible, Kant says that as there can be no knowledge of the thing-in-itself (noumenon) there can be, strictly, no metaphysics. We must distinguish Croce's position from this, because Croce views reality as the living and constantly fluctuating activity of mind, so that it is impossible for him even to discuss the thing-in-itself ; for activity of mind is not a thing. But activity of mind is, for Croce, the whole of reality : for him a transcendent reality does not exist. On such metaphysical questions Croce is no more satisfactory than Kant. He merely says that we can talk of nothing in philosophy that is not within the ambit of our experience. This is a greater restriction on philosophy, in the wider meaning attached to the term by metaphysicians, than science imposes on itself ; for in scientific hypotheses of a variable space and time, of ether and atoms and electrons, we are beyond the world of sensible experience. We may admit such hypotheses because they explain or are in some way confirmed by facts in the world of sensible experience ; but without going beyond the world

of his own sensible experience the scientist cannot make such scientific hypotheses at all.

### § 37. *Some General Objections*

Our chief difficulty in the Crocean system is, as we have seen, in the lack of assurance about the communication of aesthetic experience. We cannot truly know that a particular intuition/expression that we have enjoyed and recorded in a physical symbol does in fact reach the mind of another as the same experience. If this be true of the aesthetic moment, on which all other forms are grounded, it must be true of all activity, theoretic and practical. Croce rejects any notion of direct communication from mind to mind in any grade. One mind cannot, at any grade, even the aesthetic, make direct contact with another. All experience must go into a crucible, the existence of which is admitted, but the nature of which is declared to be unknown and unknowable.

Whence then comes my conviction not only of having authentic communications with other minds, and that my intuition/expression is comparable with that of another mind, but also of enjoying to some degree an empathetic experience of activity *in* another mind? We can know nothing, it is true, of the mass of impression, of that which is intuited before we intuit it; and we have seen that on this account we have no satisfactory assurance from Croce that, when our intuitions are resolved back, as they must be, into the common mass, they are in fact worked upon by the other mind to which we desire to make a communication. Intuitions do differ from one another. Bizet's *Carmen* is not Gounod's *Faust*. Indeed, the more complex the intuitions/expressions the greater the difference that is likely to lie between them, although, when viewed as activity of mind, they are all the same activity, that is, all aesthetic activity.

Let us suppose that some direct contact of mind does take place at a point in the unknown, just as it is in process of becoming the intuition. No activity can take place, of course, in the world of that which is intuited before we intuit it; but at the "flash-point" at which the first, lowest activity takes place, some such contact of mind is conceivable. Modern psychology, exploring the regions

of the subconscious and foreconscious, by means of its own technique, may inform us about the mechanism of such contact. Let us suppose, then, that some fundamental contact takes place at a "flash-point" between the world of mind and the unknown world of content or impression or whatever it may be. If this occurs, and we cannot see how communication is otherwise possible on our premisses, this meeting would be the basis of an assurance that genuine communication had taken place. Without such a contact I should have to say that while I knew Homer and myself both to have the same kind of aesthetic activity, that which is Homer's *Iliad* for me may have been the *Upanishads* for Homer. Communication seems to be possible only where there is contact between two aesthetically active minds working on, or at least, if one may so speak, near, the same mass of impression.

It would seem that some such contact might also be the ultimate ground of the empathetic activity we have considered. An outline of the supposed process will clarify our hypothesis. X desires to communicate his intuition/expression, E, to Y. X must record it in a physical symbol, S; but, when Y makes his first approach to the situation, it is for him necessarily resolved into an impression, I, to which he himself must give form in order to achieve the intuition/expression *e*. We may suppose that when Y crosses the frontier into the unknown hinterland of impression or content, he makes such direct contact at the frontier with the mind of X as is necessary to enable him to withdraw the proper impression upon which to impose form. At any subsequent development of activity on the part of Y, however, in connection with this intuition, it will surely be possible for him to recognize in some way the origin of his experience as the meeting-place of his mind with that of X. So he may empathetically delight in the mind of X. This latter activity is plainly volitional; but it would appear, on our hypothesis, to be grounded in a specific aesthetic activity. That as a volition/action it must be grounded in an intuition/expression is, of course, as a fundamental Crocean doctrine, admitted. I cannot directly will to delight in the mind of another without knowing of its existence; and this knowledge, like all knowledge, is fundamentally aesthetic. But is there any reason for refusing to believe

that, when so grounded in the knowledge we have described, there is empathetic activity of one mind in another that is quite incommunicable except by the same process? It would appear that friendship is to be interpreted in such a way. My friendship with A is very different from my friendship with B; and there is no simple way, if there is any practicable way at all, in which I can communicate to another precisely what I mean by either of such experiences. But in both cases it is the common ground of contact that makes possible the empathetic activity that I enjoy with A and with B respectively.<sup>1</sup>

To this hypothesis Croce might no doubt say that a doctrine of *Einfühlung* so interpreted does not say more than he would say, namely, that mind apprehends the activity of mind, not a physical object or reality external to mind. But our point is just that we cannot have empathetic activity in the mind of another solely in virtue of our being engaged in the same kind of mental activity. It is true that it would be impossible without such community of activity; but this does not mean that such community of activity assures it. The fact that X and Y are both cultured, intelligent, and energetic persons may prompt a hostess to place them next to one another at table; but, while she may so enhance the brilliance of her dinner-party, she will not, by this means, necessarily assure a friendship between these two guests.

Dissatisfied with the Crocean doctrine of the irrelevance of content or impression, we make this hypothesis, the validity of which we shall consider in our next chapter by means of a fresh approach. It may be sufficient, when we are concerned only with the character of the aesthetic fact, to say that it is only the form that counts — that, as Croce says, it is the filter that makes water filtered water. But in order to be assured of genuine communication, and in order to explain the peculiar volitional activity which we have called empathetic, we must surely have some means of seeing that the same, or approximately the same, current of water passes through our common filter.

There is, moreover, another score on which we must criticize Croce. The physical symbols, by means of which visual or auditory

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, § 43, p. 116 f.; § 55, p. 150 f.

intuitions/expressions are recorded, may be, as he asserts, of no aesthetic significance. They are mere constructions or deposits of experience. But there are many physical objects in which we delight that are not called forth by the practical activity of minds, so far as Croce can tell us. Such are trees, waterfalls, and slopes of heather. These are the "natural" objects which aestheticians have usually contrasted with "works of art". For Croce they are simply a part of the unknown realm of impression or content upon which, in recognizing them to be beautiful, we impose form. They are not, like sonatas and statues, the communication of other minds, as far as Croce can say. But they are physical in exactly the same way as are the symbols of artistic activity. Croce has to say that we neither know them nor delight in them as trees, waterfalls, and slopes of heather, but that we delight in our own intuition of them as we give them form. Nevertheless, we certainly did not create them as we may have created those physical objects we call statues and pictures.

Although we need not, at the moment, seriously consider such a supposition, it might be that they were the handiwork of God. If we did know them as the communications of an intuiting/expressing mind outside our own, we should have the same kind of empathetic activity, presumably in the mind of God, as that which we have in the mind of another artist when he confronts us with the physical symbol of his intuition. This empathetic delight would be very different from a selfish delight in our own intuition/expression. It is thoroughly unsatisfactory to have to suppose that the only delight we can have in aesthetic contemplation is that of Narcissus beholding his own face in a pool; and it is especially intolerable when the object of our contemplation is of the order of a sunset on the Alps. Unless we are wholly deceived about the communication of aesthetic experience, the delight accompanying our intuitions/expressions is not as introverted as Croce seems content to make it. The aesthetic activity is always the same, because all such activity is one; but the accompanying delight may be empathetic, carrying forward, as it were, a more primitive encounter of mind at the barrier of experience which is also the frontier of knowledge.

It seems that I may have more than one kind of delight accompanying the same aesthetic activity. I may look at *La Vierge à*



*l'Hostie* in the Louvre, and have an intuition/expression. This is knowledge. Accompanying this knowledge may be not only the purely introverted delight that I may get from having achieved an intuition at all, but also several kinds of extroverted delight, having as their ultimate ground an encounter with a mind intending to communicate with me. I might, for instance, delight in the mind of Ingres, who painted the picture. But I might also delight in the mind of anyone who had helped to build up the communication at its remoter stages. I might well delight, for example, in the minds of the devout who practise eucharistic adoration, to the extent to which their intuitions as such coincide with that of Ingres as communicated to me by means of the physical symbol called *La Vierge à l'Hostie*. If God exists, it may also be possible for me to delight in the divine mind to the extent that, in making my own intuition/expression, I have had a genuine encounter with the divine mind at the frontier of experience. We propose to examine such possibilities in detail in the later stages of our work.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOME DIFFICULTIES, AND A FRESH APPROACH

#### § 38. *The Fundamental Difficulties*

WE have been able to accept much of Croce's philosophy as a coherent and illuminating account of experience, and we are certain that in his isolation of the aesthetic fact as the groundwork of all experience is to be found the only satisfactory approach to the main problem of aesthetics. We have dissented from him, however, on several points that he thinks important. We are particularly unwilling to acquiesce in his idealist agnosticism.

Modern thought tends to the recognition of levels of life underlying mind, in continual flux, coming up against mind, external to it, and in large part independent of it. Such a view makes both idealism and realism, in the old sense, unacceptable. For what is thus the basis of mind must be actual, and yet it is not mind ; so that idealism as such is shown to be inadequate. But, on the other side, this sort of being is not what the tidy diagrams of everyday perception and mathematical science make of it ; and so realism too is found wanting. We cannot go back uncritically to a naïve realism, nor do we propose to commit ourselves to any one of the modern re-statements of the realist position. In any case, ours is not an epistemological investigation. We merely inquire, at this stage, how we are to reconcile the Crocean aesthetic with the postulates of the Catholic tradition in which, in our later chapters, we are to try to answer our main inquiry. It is beyond the scope of our present needs, for example, to ask how, precisely, we apprehend in mental activity the nature of reality external to mind, or, indeed, what that external reality in fact is. But we must seek to find some grounds for assurance of the reality of identical physical occasions of experience that seem to elicit identical expressions by artist and appreciator alike, and also to show that both our interpretation of Croce's aesthetic and our interpretation of the theory of *Einfühlung* are compatible

with the religious tradition in which we intend to analyse our main problem.

### § 39. *Two Problems*

Let us set forth two problems, the solution of which would help us to proceed to our main inquiry :

#### (A) AESTHETIC INTUITION AND "ORDINARY" PERCEPTION

Croce distinguishes aesthetic intuition from "ordinary" perception. As an idealist, he does not admit, of course, that the one apprehends external reality any more than does the other, independently of the intuiting or perceiving mind. Nevertheless, he distinguishes them ; and we must be quite clear what that distinction means for us, in terms of our interpretation of his aesthetic.

Where aesthetic intuition has not been isolated, "ordinary" perception has been regarded by many as a means of knowing the external world. We must consider to what extent, if any, this claim is true, and also how, if we do apprehend reality by "ordinary" perception, we claim to apprehend reality much better by aesthetic intuition. In general, the man in the street tacitly claims to enjoy through "ordinary" perception a complete knowledge of the thing-in-itself, but the artist asserts that by looking at things aesthetically he has a deeper insight into the reality which the man in the street assumes than he grasps by "ordinary" perception. What qualifications must we attach to the point of view of the man in the street, and to what extent are we to admit this claim of the artist ?

#### (B) AESTHETIC APPEARANCE AND REALITY

What is the relation of aesthetic appearance to external reality ? When we look at an external object aesthetically, we say we are convinced of the "reality" of our aesthetic experience. We also hold, against Croce, that we may recognize that this "real" of aesthetic experience is not unrelated to an independent external reality. We hold, therefore, that as there is some sense in which we may claim to know the thing-in-itself by intellectual reflection, we may also know it, although differently, for the mode of our experience is a different one, in aesthetic experience. Moreover, if this be

so, the manner of our apprehension in aesthetic experience must be a peculiarly important one ; for aesthetic experience is the ground, and the *terminus a quo*, of all experience. We regard the solution of this problem as of paramount importance.

In the next section we shall consider briefly how Saint Thomas dealt with these difficulties, and in §§ 41 and 42, respectively, we shall try to provide our own solution to them.

#### § 40. *The Thomist Approach*

There is no major question in Christian philosophy or theology that can be adequately treated without reference to Saint Thomas. But his relevance is peculiarly obvious in view of our expressed intention to deal with our main inquiry in the atmosphere of a tradition in which, as *Doctor Angelicus*, he has for long exercised very great authority indeed. The later Catholic mystics, whom we shall study for the help they can give us, are either steeped in his philosophy, or accept it as the basis underlying all that they have to say about the spiritual life. Even apart from the necessity of ascertaining at this stage an answer to the questions we raise, and of obtaining any help that Thomas can give us, it is certainly most important that we should at least make clear in advance the distinctions at the root of our treatment of the main problem and of the mystics' exposition of their experience. Moreover, although we cannot uncritically accept the Thomist epistemology, there are many respects in which we are more in sympathy with the Thomist than with the Crocean approach ; and to one who is willing to follow us with sympathy when we come to our study of mystical experience, these respects will be, in the long run, the respects that matter most.

Thomas ignored, although he did not necessarily deny, in his theory of our knowledge of the particular, the aspect of cognition that we most stress, namely, activity of mind ;<sup>1</sup> and yet it seems to

<sup>1</sup> One must avoid misunderstanding what the schoolmen mean, however, when they speak of faculties as passive. A passive faculty is one which is passive before being operative, and which must be informed by something other than itself before it can become active. It is distinguished from an active power, which needs no such influence, but goes into action as soon as the necessary conditions are present. External objects stimulate the "passive" faculties in some way, and these react, completing the cognitive process.

underlie his doctrine of our knowledge of God. Thomism considers cognition as a state of possessing an object. Sensation is taken to consist in the awareness of a sensible through the actuation of sense by a form (*species*), which is that of the object *qua* sensible.

#### (A) AESTHETIC INTUITION AND "ORDINARY" PERCEPTION

Between these terms, of course, Saint Thomas makes no distinction. But he held that in sensory perception one laid hold of the *species sensibilis*. He saw that this was not a very satisfactory kind of apprehension compared with intellectual cognition, by which we lay hold of the *species intelligibilis*; but it nevertheless seemed somehow to have some validity of its own. Saint Thomas did not recognize in it, however, any independence as a mode of cognition, and so, very properly, from his standpoint, he aimed at equating the two kinds of cognition as far as he could. From our point of view it is not surprising to find that, in spite of his masterly efforts, he was faced with a succession of difficulties, and had to content himself with approximating the two. Even in this he did not succeed; nor could he, for he was trying to approximate what are, in our view, two fundamentally separate modes of mental activity. On the suppositions he had to make, it is difficult to see how he could have done otherwise than try to approximate sense and intellect; but we regard the approximation as no less unsatisfactory for that.

Gilson holds that the whole Thomist epistemology is based on the proposition that intellect attains to being and takes possession of the *species sensibilis*, which is transformed in the process. The objectivity of knowledge, Gilson goes on to say, is based, therefore, upon the *species sensibilis* as the meeting-point between intellect and the object.<sup>1</sup> Sense is required as a mediator between immaterial intellect and material object. We therefore need a doctrine of degrees of materiality. Moreover, it is fundamental to Thomism that knowledge involves assimilation of knower and known. Not the material object, but a *species* must be united with the cognitive

<sup>1</sup> *Le Thomisme*, c. 11, note 40. Gilson quotes Saint Thomas: "Cum vero praedictas species [sc. intelligibiles] in actu completo habuerit, vocatur intellectus in actu. Sic enim actu intelligit res, cum species rei facta fuerit forma intellectus possibilis" (*Opusc.* 3 (ed. Rom. 2), *Compend. Theol. ad Reginaldum*, c. 83).

faculty. One might have supposed the *species sensibilis* to be as material as the *species intelligibilis* is immaterial ; but this Aquinas denies,<sup>1</sup> although he is doubtful, it seems, how immaterial the reception into the mind must be.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas regarded intellect as cognitive *par excellence* ; but we uphold this view only in the sense that intellect finally examines, recognizes, and secures the veridical character of what we call aesthetic activity. Even here he is confronted by intolerable difficulties. Little alleviation is afforded by the Thomist theory that, ideally, intellect knows substantive forms ; but, on the other hand, some measure of escape is found in the *conversio ad phantasmata*. This is the familiar Aristotelian doctrine that the mind never thinks without an image, which Aquinas seems fully to accept.<sup>3</sup> But he does not ever seem fully to explain it. Some obscurity remains. He does not succeed in refuting even the objections that he himself raises to the doctrine of the indispensability of *phantasmata* in the cognitive process.

In spite of this, in the *conversio ad phantasmata* we have a doctrine in many respects similar to Croce's doctrine of the recession of experience into the crucible from which fresh aesthetic experience is obtained. On this we must say more presently. Our most vigorous protest under the present head is against the Thomist doctrine of degrees of materiality. The material can never be immaterial enough to stop being material, as a colour can never become pale enough to stop being a colour. On the other hand, it will be apparent from our next section that we fully sympathize with the dissatisfaction which Aquinas felt towards sensory cognition. We shall try to solve this problem by making a distinction which he elided.

<sup>1</sup> " Similitudo corporalis, quae requiritur ad operationem imaginationis et sensus " is said to be " immaterialior quam ipsum corpus " (*De Ver.* 13, 4 ad 6).

<sup>2</sup> " Sensus autem recipit species sine materia, sed tamen cum conditionibus materialibus species depuratas recipit " (*De Ver.* 2, 2 ; cf. *De Anima*, 13 ; *De Ver.* 2, 5, and 23, 1). Thomas seems doubtful how material the reception must be : in one place it is simply *materialiter* (*De Ver.* 2, 5), in another it is only *quodammodo materialiter* (*De Ver.* 19, 2), while in a third it is *non omnino materialiter* (*De Ver.* 23, 1). Even in touch the reception is in some way *immaterialiter* (*De Anima*, 13).

<sup>3</sup> *S. Th.* 1, 75, 6 ad 3 ; 1, 89, 1 ; 2-2, 180, 8.

## (B) AESTHETIC APPEARANCE AND REALITY

Untroubled by the doubts of phenomenalism, the Thomist doctrine of our knowledge of the particular was that in cognition the mind lays hold of the *forma realis* more or less satisfactorily. In sense perception we see the sensible accidents of the real, which are part of the real. Nor did the problems of illusion and hallucination much trouble Thomas who believed the world around him to be on the whole very much what it looked like. Sense perception was for him an imperfect instrument indeed ; but by means of it the mind could detach and appropriate the *species sensibilis* of the object, and in so doing detach and appropriate part of its reality. Nevertheless it is materiality that is the bar to intelligibility ; and so a further crop of scholastic distinctions has to be made.

On this question we shall have much to say presently. It is enough for the present purpose simply to indicate how Thomas met the problem that corresponded in his philosophy to the one that now troubles us. It would be difficult, however, to stress too much the fact that the problems of a schoolman of the thirteenth century cannot possibly be considered as if they were the problems of a philosopher of the present century. There is no more foolish and tiresome practice than trying to decide which side of the fence a philosopher came down on before the fence was there. Nevertheless, because the fence was perhaps not wholly absent, or may have been in a different place, if it was anywhere, we have glanced at the Thomist scene before considering these two problems in our own way.

§ 41. *Aesthetic Intuition and "Ordinary" Perception*

On this point we can hardly be said to dispute with Saint Thomas, since for him the distinction does not arise. Between the phantasm and the *species sensibilis*, Thomas recognized a distinction such as there is between the particular and the universal (*sunt alterius generis*) ;<sup>1</sup> but he did not press far in this direction. Just because of this difference and the fact that the phantasms are required to make intellectual knowledge possible, he regarded them as but

<sup>1</sup> *De Anima*, 4 ad 5.

the instruments of intellect. We, on the other hand, accept Croce's view on this question, although we think it requires special exposition in face of a very widespread elision of the Crocean distinction between intuition and perception. If we neglected to make this distinction, we should almost certainly be confused at a later stage into thinking that the Catholic mystics meant one thing when they meant in fact another, or that they made a distinction when in fact they made none.

Instead of trying to approximate sense and intellect, Croce frankly opposes them. Here, he says, are two quite separate activities, each with its own validity. They stand in intimate relationship to one another, as has been described, but they are none the less distinct. Thinking, logically, simply is not intuiting, aesthetically; and they can no more be approximated to one another than knowing and willing.

Now, one of these modes, the aesthetic, does not by itself at all know that which the intellect distinguishes as real. It does not even concern itself with such a question. It would not be unplausible to hold that it even seemed to *prefer* what the intellect does not corroborate as veridical according to intellectual experience. That is to say, it might seem to be more at home with the gods and demons of mythology and the sprites and dragons of folk-lore than with the world that intellectual reflection calls real. But is it necessarily so? When we say that "truth is stranger than fiction" we surely mean that the world of intellectual truth may often be presented in such a way as to be more wonderful, more fascinating, in short, more aesthetically convincing, than the world of "pure imagination". It might disappoint us to learn that there were really Greek gods after all, or that fairies had in fact been photographed in Christ Church Meadow, or even that all the characters in *Hamlet* and all that they did had a solid foundation in the annals of Danish history. But if, psychologically, we were able to recover from the shock, it would be possible not only to continue our aesthetic enjoyment of these things, but even to enjoy them better. At any rate, although art need not be true from a logical standpoint, it is no less art for being demonstrably true on logical analysis. What art must not do, however, is to recognize itself as true or false from an intellectual or



logical standpoint, for with such a question it is not in the nature of art to concern itself.

According to the Crocean doctrine of the crucible, we continually recast all our experience, so that we apprehend aesthetically what we have recast from other activity, for example, the intellectual. Intellectually, we recognize a chair for what it is in intellectual terms. We recognize its "chairness", and may even hold an epistemological theory about it. But so far from derogating from the validity or enjoyment of our aesthetic experience of a particular chair, this intellectual reflection even enriches it, provided we have carefully put back our intellectual activity into the darkness of the crucible of passive mental content, and re-intuited/expressed with clarity and vigour.<sup>1</sup> Here may be a solution of the problem of *phenomenal* materiality at least; for we may enjoy the rich "matter" of the sensible, with the form, which intellect has abstracted from it, standing out, so to speak, from the matter to which it belongs. In aesthetic experience we may thus know the external world as well as our general experience permits, and this aesthetic experience becomes in its turn the ground of further knowledge and action.

But there is an obvious difficulty. Does this mean that percipients ordinarily know the external world without error? Plainly not. People are constantly being ill-informed by sense perception. What, then, is the relation of this "ordinary" perception to aesthetic experience? When the common man looks at a tree, he has both aesthetic and intellectual activity, as do both artist and arboriculturist; but, apart from the relative sluggishness of all mental activity in his case, he does not keep the two modes of activity pure. He does not, that is to say, make a clear intellectual abstraction from aesthetic experience, carefully put it back into the crucible, and then clearly intuit a now intellectually clarified object, the "form" of the tree. His aesthetic activity and his intellectual activity are not merely sluggish, which would not matter, fundamentally, but confused. The "ordinary" percipient does not, as it were, fully "declutch" as he changes gear; and the result of such neglect over a long period is, of course, that the action of

<sup>1</sup> Here Croce would remind us, no doubt, that from the content to the form there is "no passage". This question will arise in our next section.

changing gear is almost lost, or at least so seriously impaired that he does not either think as logically or apprehend as intuitively as he might. All people have aesthetic experience — we recall Croce's dictum, *homo nascitur poeta*, which we believe to be profoundly true — and all men reason. *Gloria hominis ratio et oratio*. But in "ordinary" perception people so habitually muddle the two modes of activity as to cause them to some extent — often a very considerable extent — mutually to destroy their veridical character. In spite of this, however, there is enough truth left in "ordinary" perception to meet most of the demands of everyday life. Indeed, inasmuch as our lives are largely superficial, and often necessarily so, we need the easier, cheaper, handier kind of cognition that "ordinary" perception gives us. Hence its popularity. We may not affect to despise this kind of perception; for without it daily life would become intolerable, even in the most sheltered and otherwise favourable circumstances.

This "ordinary" perception does not interest the artist, *qua* artist, at all. He may make it his point of departure; and schools of art, at least in the past, have probably nearly always done so; but until the aesthetic experience it confusedly contains is disentangled from the "ordinary" perception, the "ordinary" perception has no artistic significance at all. It is of no more interest to the artist what the common man thinks a bottle looks like, than it is to the physicist bent on ascertaining its molecular structure. The artist must coax the spectator back from perception to aesthetic intuition. Indeed, *c'est son métier*.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that, ideally, the artist, *qua* artist, ought not so to perceive "ordinarily" at all, but should spend his whole artistic

<sup>1</sup> Roger Fry, in *Vision and Design* (Phoenix Lib. ed., 1928, pp. 19-20), says that in art we become more truly spectators, not capriciously selecting what we see, so that there comes to our notice a number of appearances and relations of appearances which would have escaped our notice before. In everyday life our needs are so imperative that our vision becomes highly specialized in their service, and so enjoys much less freedom. Later (pp. 24-25), he goes on to say: "With an admirable economy we learn to see only so much as is needful for our purpose; but this is in fact very little, just enough to recognise and identify each object or person; that done, they go into an entry in our mental catalogue and are no more really seen. In actual life the normal person really only reads the labels, as it were, on the objects around him, and troubles no further."

life enriching aesthesis by intellect without ever contaminating one activity by the other.<sup>1</sup> To do so very rigorously would place him, however, so far from the crowd of erring percipients that it might often be difficult for him to lead them back from the confused entanglement of "ordinary" perception to pure aesthetic knowledge. It is part of the artist's practical work, therefore, to take this fact into consideration; but nevertheless, it is not, in Croce's narrower sense, the true work of the artist. From this strict point of view, we must say that whether the artist works from one kind of error or another, or from no error at all, cannot be of the slightest interest to aesthetics. What matters is not where he starts, but what he does when he has started, that is, when he has got back from so-called perception of the real to pure intuition which does not care whether its object is real or not, but nevertheless, when so enriched by intellectual abstraction duly put back into the crucible of experience, truly apprehends in aesthetic experience an abstraction from the reality "behind" the physical object.

We have thus three separate ideas :

- (i) "Ordinary" perception, a handy but confused manner of cognition, which is highly susceptible to error.
- (ii) Aesthetic experience *simpliciter*, which does not care whether its objects are real, and submits them to no intellectual test, but distinguishes within itself the aesthetically convincing from the aesthetically unconvincing.
- (iii) Aesthetic experience enriched by other experience, including intellectual or logical reflection, put back into the crucible upon

Cf. the much discussed "epiphanies" to which James Joyce alludes in *Ulysses* (ed. John Lane, 1941, p. 37). In a fragmentary manuscript, an early draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (in Harvard College Library, now published by Jonathan Cape as *Stephen Hero*), occurs a passage, omitted from the final version of the work, in which Joyce's *alter ego* finds even the clock of the Dublin Ballast Office "capable of an epiphany" : "I will pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and know at once what it is : epiphany. . . . Imagine my glimpses as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanized."

<sup>1</sup> We say *qua* artist; for without some use of "ordinary" perception, everyday life would become quite impossible.

the content of which aesthetic intuition/expression imposes form when aesthetic experience emerges. This aesthetic experience does not care, for no aesthetic experience can care, about the intellectually veridical character of its objects ; but it is still an unavoidable fact that the objects it recognizes are intellectually true, and, which is very important, that it now sees these concepts aesthetically, and so grasps the intellectually real in a new way. From such aesthetic experience further intellectual and other abstraction may in turn be made.

We shall have much more to say on (ii) and (iii) in our next section. The main purpose of the present section is simply to distinguish them from (i), as we have tried to do.

#### § 42. *Aesthetic Appearance and Reality*

On the relation of the aesthetic appearance to reality, both Saint Thomas and Croce fail us. We cannot go back to the Thomist position here, nor can we acquiesce, on the other hand, in Croce's complete agnosticism. For Croce it is sufficient to say that the aesthetic activity is as real as any experience can be. To ask in what way it is related to the thing-in-itself, the *forma realis*, is for him a meaningless question. We, on the other hand, deem it very necessary to have some assurance at least that the aesthetic appearance stands in some relation to the *forma realis*. The physical occasions of experience are constant. Several minds recognize them at the same time ; and they recognize them in a manner sufficiently identical to make the community and communication of aesthesis possible. Moreover, intellectually we know that what we see in aesthetic experience of a chair is in some sense the same chair about which we reflect intellectually.

We may shelve the problem of physical materiality as important only for epistemology as such. Nor need it trouble us that the way in which the thing is in itself differs, no doubt, from the way in which we see it through our senses. The number of possible appearances that may be presented by, or arise from, the thing-in-itself may be potentially almost infinite, so that any one of them that we have is a selection from the vast realm of possible appearances ;

but, in determinate circumstances, several persons may apprehend sense-data so nearly identical as to make their aesthetic intuition practically the same. It is this that specially interests us. The artist commonly says that he is interested in "reality", but of course this "reality" is the reality of appearance taken as appearance of the real. But the artist does not mean that he apprehends the reality of the crude matter of intuition, divorced from all intellectual interpretation. He has put back into the crucible of experience an intellectual abstraction, answering the question "of what reality in particular is this the appearance?", so that in the moment of aesthetic intuition of a chair he can apprehend it aesthetically as a chair. It is only when, as we saw in the last section, we do not so carefully recast such intellectual abstractions in the crucible that we merely "perceive", contaminating our aesthesis with logical thought.

It happens very often that two persons have different intuitions of what is taken to be an identical physical object. We should almost expect this to happen when the two persons are widely separated by race, for instance. But at least such different intuitions do not conflict. That is to say, one person may, so to speak, sketch more fully to the top right of his aesthetic "picture", while the other sketches more fully to the bottom left of his, but at no point would it be possible for one to overlay one "picture" by the other and point to a conflicting "design". The two intuitions may be complementary; but, so long as the aesthetic experience is in both cases genuine, they cannot be really contradictory.

All this is true, however, only to the extent that an intellectual abstraction has been replaced in the crucible. Keats's affirmation that "beauty is truth, truth beauty", is not true, if it claims that beauty is intellectually true, while if it claims that beauty is aesthetically true, it is redundant, for this is merely to say that beauty is aesthetic. It has been held that beauty is simply intellectual truth presented to our immediate consciousness. In very different ways both Aquinas and Hegel may have held such a view. But we are unwilling to accept any position that might lead to regarding aesthetic experience as a *cognitio confusa*. We insist with Croce that it is a distinct mode of knowledge. Aesthetic experience *as such* tells us nothing about intellectual truth, for it is quite alogical,

innocent of all intellectual reflection. Such complete intellectual innocence is posited when we isolate aesthetic experience philosophically. It is doubtful whether it ever exists in fact, although a small infant must surely come near it if he aesthetically apprehends the moon without caring whether it is a few yards or a quarter of a million miles away. But there is something of this innocence in all aesthetic experience.

The occasion of aesthetic experience may not be a physical object at all. A rainbow or a sunset is as good as a mountain, to say the least. Indeed, there need be no immediate sensory stimulation from the external world. Hamlet, we suppose, existed only in Shakespeare's mind. We say that in works such as *Hamlet* we have an apprehension of reality ; but it is clear that this is not necessarily an apprehension by means of the immediate presentation of reality to our senses. What makes us call *Hamlet* truly aesthetic is that it is aesthetically convincing, just as the work of a scientist or philosopher may be intellectually convincing. Aesthetically, far from making any distinction as to the extent to which we grasp reality as immediately presented to our senses, we evidently do not care whether the aesthetic object even exists. We care very much, on the other hand, whether what purports to be beautiful (or tragic, or sublime, if we admit such terms) carries with it its own conviction, independently of whether it can be shown, by intellectual reflection, to exist. We regard Housman as fortunate because he can see the cherry tree "wearing white for Eastertide", and fairies who "break their dances and leave the printed lawn", although we know perfectly well that fairies do not exist and that cherry trees do not consider the Christian Year. We are convinced, however, that what Housman tells us has aesthetic truth. If a poet told us that he knew of a cherry tree that sang the Easter Sequence, or of fairies that slouched home, we should be unmoved ; for he would not be telling the truth aesthetically, however prettily he tried to write. To our aesthetic knowledge of reality, as we have it from Housman, we may add logical reflection to demonstrate what is and what is not true from an intellectual standpoint ; but this affects the aesthetic conviction that the poetry carries with it no more than the application of mathematics to a moral or immoral purpose affects the intellectual

conviction that mathematics carries within itself.<sup>1</sup>

Croce would acknowledge, no doubt, the truth of what we have just been saying ; but he would also say that beauty (the aesthetic fact, which convinces) is simply the expression of a state of mind, *i.e.* of one's *emozionalità non elaborata esteticamente*.<sup>2</sup> Now, we do not wholly repudiate this. In aesthetic experience we do intuit/express our state of mind. But how does our state of mind arise ? It is, of course, constantly affected by the whole gamut of our mental activity. What is put into the crucible from which we draw our intuitions/expressions is determined by the nature of the grasp of reality afforded by the various modes of experience. It is universally accepted that education and environment considerably affect the kind of intuitions/expressions that we are to have. A person who has been influenced chiefly by Chinese culture is not to be expected to have the same kind of reaction to an aesthetic situation as a person nurtured on the humanities, although the vigour of their aesthetic activity may be identical. The resonances set up in the mind of a Frenchman hearing the *Marseillaise* are unlikely to be the same as those of an Englishman whose musical education is comparable. The widely divergent evaluations made by one country upon the art of another demonstrate this point : many Frenchmen, for instance, who know English literature well, esteem Byron the greatest English poet. Still more obvious is the truth of this when one religious tradition evaluates the life and work of another. Even in common admiration of a devotional work, representatives of a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bergson (*Le Rire*, 1, 5, p. 42 f.) : " Une proposition comme celle-ci : ' mes vêtements habituels font partie de mon corps ' est absurde aux yeux de la raison. Néanmoins, l'imagination la tient pour vraie. . . . Il y a donc une logique de l'imagination qui n'est pas la logique de la raison, qui s'y oppose même parfois, et avec laquelle il faudra pourtant que la philosophie compte. . . . C'est quelque chose comme la logique du rêve, mais d'un rêve qui ne serait pas abandonné au caprice de la fantaisie individuelle, étant le rêve rêvé par la société entière. Pour la reconstituer, un effort d'un genre tout particulier est nécessaire, par lequel on soulèvera la croûte extérieure de jugements bien tassés et d'idées solidement assises, pour regarder couler tout au fond de soi-même, ainsi qu'une nappe d'eau souterraine, une certaine continuité fluide d'images qui entrent les unes dans les autres. Cette interpénétration des images ne se fait pas au hasard. Elle obéit à des lois, ou plutôt à des habitudes, qui sont à l'imagination ce que la logique est à la pensée."

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 48.

different tradition tend to prize qualities almost overlooked by the tradition in which the work emerged. A Muslim might admire the *Adoro te devote* ; but it is hardly likely that he would admire it for the reason that a Catholic does, except to the extent that he dramatized himself as a Catholic. In every case it is the state of one's mind that is intuited/expressed ; but this state, this *emozionabilità non elaborata esteticamente* is itself determined by what is put there by one's own activity. The state of mind of a thief is not the same as that of an honest man, nor is that of a ploughboy the same as that of a scientist. When aesthetic activity is impending in the mind of any of them, the resonances set up will be very different. Of course all have aesthetic experience : whether one hears the peal of a carillon or the sound of a village bell, one still *hears*. So one may have aesthetic experience while being alogical and amoral ; but a thoughtful, and, perhaps especially, a conspicuously moral, person has obviously immense advantages when he does have aesthetic experience. He has equipped himself in such a way as to make himself likely to command a much richer and firmer grasp of reality by his intuitions/expressions. The vigour of the Levite's aesthetic activity may have been equal to that of the Good Samaritan, but we may suppose that the philanthropy of the latter contributed something to the impression, matter, or content of his aesthetic experience, and that the Levite's mind lacked this enrichment. Likewise, while a superficial thinker may write in a pellucid style, a profound thinker who writes equally well plainly achieves a firmer grasp of reality through his expression. Morality and reason, although irrelevant to aesthetic activity, cannot be said to be so irrelevant to the impression or content expressed in that activity, for they help to make it what it is.

We have seen that we must distinguish carefully between (a) aesthetic experience *simpliciter*, existing ideally or only at the first instant in consciousness, which is innocent of all intellectual reflection and moral discrimination, being both alogical and amoral, and (b) aesthetic experience enriched by recast thought and action, which, although also alogical and amoral as a mode of activity, cannot be said to be completely innocent of intellectual reflection and moral discrimination, because it emerges from a crucible into



which such higher activity has been put back. The content of our minds upon which in the (philosophically) first moment of experience we impose aesthetic form cannot be simply crude passion, but must have at least qualities determinable when the form is imposed. Here Croce would have to remind us that it is the form, that is, the aesthetic activity, that makes aesthetic experience what it is.<sup>1</sup> We admit this ; but we hold that the grasp of reality that we may have in aesthetic experience depends in some measure upon the grasp we have of it in the experience we have replaced in the crucible to be intuited/expressed anew. Croce says that from the content to the form there is no " passage ", because he does not believe we can grasp external reality at any level of experience. To all who repudiate this kind of agnosticism, it is obvious that if we have genuine experience of external reality at any level, and recast such experience in the crucible, and re-intuit/express, we do not lose the grasp we already have, but, on the contrary, enrich it by our fresh aesthetic experience.

We may illustrate the relationship of (a) aesthetic experience *simpliciter* and (b) aesthetic experience so enriched, by referring to higher levels of experience. Let us suppose the case of an intellectual prodigy who is quite amoral. It is clear not only that it is impossible for him to be, for example, a moral philosopher, but that he will be considerably hampered in many fields of intellectual activity. We should probably call him not fully adult, just as we should call a completely alogical artist an overgrown child. Nevertheless, our intellectual prodigy might be a very efficient scientist, though a dangerous one, for the fact that he could not be confronted by the reality of an ethical situation nor pass a moral judgment would not in the least hamper the validity of his intellectual grasp of the real, which might be formidable in mathematics or astronomy, for example. A morally earnest person might point out that he had not fully grasped life ; but while this would be true from a moral standpoint, he would still be able to grasp life as well as it can be grasped by intellect morally unenriched. Now, the case of the completely unreflective artist is clearly parallel. He would not make

<sup>1</sup> According to Croce, from the content to the form there is no " passage ".

even the clumsy assumptions of "ordinary" percipients to which we referred in the preceding section ; for he would not care, for example, about the existence or non-existence in time and space of a physical object ; nor would the rules of logic at all disturb his intellectual innocence. Although incoherent from a logical standpoint, he would not be wholly incoherent, as a madman might be. He would have aesthetic coherence, that is, he would distinguish between the aesthetically satisfying or convincing, such as a tree rooted in earth, whose branches wave in the summer breeze, and that which is not aesthetically satisfying or convincing, such as one whose roots wave in the summer breeze and whose branches are in the earth.

We need hardly say that such perfect cases of alogicality and amorality probably do not ever exist in fact ; but it is well known, on the other hand, that in certain persons a lower mode of experience is freakishly vigorous in comparison with others. The moralist who speaks of clever devils is probably thinking of such persons. But we call well-developed a personality whose activity is not developed at one level at the expense of another. Such a well-developed personality is continually enriching one mode of his experience by another, so that it is not inhibited at any point. Artists are not necessarily alogical, nor scholars necessarily amoral. On the contrary, one tends to expect, on the whole, that a person who excels in either art or thought or behaviour will be at least not deficient in other modes of activity. When a widely cultured person enjoys aesthetic experience, he has turned to a rich mental content which, although it does not make his aesthetic experience any more aesthetic than that of less distinguished persons, makes the grasp of reality that we hold he attains in aesthetic experience much greater. We agree with Croce, therefore, that the nature of the content upon which the aesthetic form is imposed does not affect the nature of the aesthetic act. A man may behave morally or immorally quite apart from the intellectual truth or falsity of the propositions upon which he bases his behaviour : morality is always morality, and aesthesis aesthesis, just as genuine intellectual activity is always intellectually valid. We do hold, however, that the grasp of external reality that we believe to be available in aesthetic activity varies with the

state of the content that Croce calls *emozionalità non elaborata esteticamente*. It is to this content that all experience is being constantly returned for aesthetic elaboration. We hold Croce's dictum, that there is no passage from the qualities of the content to those of the form,<sup>1</sup> to be true only in the sense in which it is possible for Croce to intend it, that is, in the context of his agnosticism about our having any grasp of external reality at all. If we admit any grasp of external reality, it seems we must admit a sense in which there is passage from content to form, for the nature of the content must obviously affect the extent of our grasp of reality by any form that is imposed upon it. Otherwise, the shepherd lad surveying the hillside aesthetically would enjoy as rich and firm a grasp of reality by his aesthetic experience as would Virgil or Wordsworth in the same situation.

This does not mean that what I see (*i.e.* aesthetically intuit) when I look at a picture is determined by the content of my mind. Aesthetically, it does not matter what the content is, just as, morally, the state of the moral agent's mind does not matter, but only what he does in a moral situation. But the grasp of reality in any mode of experience I have depends in some measure upon the experience I have already deposited in the crucible. If I look at the Tower of London aesthetically, I recast my intellectual determination of it *as* the Tower of London. This is aesthetic knowledge of an intellectual affirmation, just as a moral judgment is an intellectual judgment on a moral situation.

This aesthetic knowledge differs, as we have seen, from that of "ordinary" perception. It also differs from illusion and hallucination, which have worked back from false premisses to aesthesis. It has worked back, on the other hand, from sound intellectual judgment, and has then grasped reality in the unique fashion peculiar to aesthetic experience. It remains true, of course, that aesthetic activity is the groundwork, philosophically, of all other experience. Although I make moral judgments, morality is still grounded in knowledge. I am morally responsible only for having done what I know, intellectually, I ought not to have done, and for having not done what I know I ought to have done; and I am intellectually

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 13, p. 49; § 33, p. 77.

responsible only for what is given me in aesthetic experience.<sup>1</sup>

For our purpose, we think it is not necessary to go further than this. The greater problems of epistemology do not concern us. We do not attempt, as did Thomas, to say that we apprehend sensible or other accidents of the real. We do not think of experience of the external real in this way. We claim that we do apprehend external reality ; but the precise manner or mechanism of our cognition, and the nature of the apprehended external real, is beyond our scope. We merely agree with Thomas to the extent of admitting with him that we apprehend that which is external to ourselves and "comes up against us", in opposition to Croce, who would repudiate the possibility of such a claim ; and on the other hand we admit the Crocean distinction of modes of experience, and say that the kind of grasp of reality secured in aesthetic, intellectual, "economic", and moral activity is different in each case, and that one kind of experience is, at least for us human beings, no substitute for another. Reality as presented in moral experience is no more and no less real than reality as presented in intellectual reflection ; nor is reality as presented in the aesthetic appearance. Our assurance of the reality of identical physical occasions of experience that seem to elicit identical expressions by artist and appreciator alike, is an intellectual assurance ; but the experience itself is still aesthetic.

### § 43. *Saint Thomas and "Einfühlung"*

When we come to consider the compatibility of our interpretation of *Einfühlung* with Thomism, our task is more straightforward. We decided in our last chapter that, while we could not attach much significance to certain expositions of this aesthetic theory, we found one interpretation of it that was very meaningful. We also observed,<sup>2</sup> however, that this activity could not be aesthetic in the Crocean sense, but that it must be practical activity, an act of the will, as Lipps himself intended.

<sup>1</sup> We do not ignore the fact, especially well known in Christian experience, that an immoral will may corrupt the intellect. An illogical mind may likewise corrupt the imagination. But this is due to the adulteration of knowledge and will, and imagination and logic, respectively. In dealing with ideally isolated modes of experience such a question does not arise.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 35, p. 87.

The Thomist doctrine of knowledge by assimilation to the very form of the real seems to have its proper application in the empathetic experience we have envisaged. I shape my empathetic act into the very shape of the other's act, and in this way "know," not the sensible, but the other sentient. Saint Thomas saw that God was to be known at last *per essentiam*, that is, his essential form was to be somehow directly united with the intellect of the beatified without the interposition of sense. It is only thus that we could know him who "is a Spirit". We do not consider, at this stage, whether we can know God at all, but only whether, if we could know him, it would be possible to do so empathetically. We believe that Thomas supports our view that we could. He considers our knowledge of God by the analogy of sense-knowledge. At present we have some participative approximations to the *visio Dei*. Even by reason we may to some extent know God, and in faith we may know him better still, by an authoritative analogical description. On the necessity of faith we shall have something to say in our next chapter. But Thomas also saw that under certain very favourable circumstances one might enjoy a closer approximation to the ultimate "vision" in the mystical experience of being raised by God, even in our present lowly state, into true friendship with him.

The ideal of beatitude is so to know God *per essentiam*. If in this life we cannot know even separate substances (*i.e.* angels) by reason of the connaturality of our intellect to the data of sense, so, Thomas argues, much less can we expect in this life to know God *per essentiam*.<sup>1</sup> We cannot see God "face to face" as do the blessed; but we can enjoy certain participative approximations to such knowledge. We may "know" him, not by aesthesis, which is impossible, for "no man hath seen God at any time", nor by discursive reason, for the "knowledge" we have in mind is much more direct than that, but by the shaping of our act to that of him who is *Actus Purus*. In mystical experience we do this as nearly as it is possible to do it on earth; and to do it perfectly is the reward and joy of the blessed in heaven.

Now it is one thing to do this in a finite mind, and another to do it in the infinite mind of God. In human friendship we seem to

<sup>1</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3, 47.

enjoy some limited activity of this kind ; but if we could enjoy it in the mind of God, the experience would be as different from that of human friendship as God is different from us and our friends. In even the deepest and greatest human love and friendship, the activity of two persons cannot be expected wholly to coincide ; but in activity in God's mind we should be wholly enveloped by his activity, as it were, so that we could engage all our activity without, of course, engaging the whole activity of God. So one beatified creature may see God better than another, as Thomas says,<sup>1</sup> although every beatified creature must be said fully to enjoy him. Cups may be of many sizes, and yet each brimming full, without exhausting the ocean's depths. No creature in so " seeing " God or " knowing " God, " sees " or " knows " all that is to be " seen " or " known " in him.<sup>2</sup> We do not comprehend the divine substance, but we " see " it, being caught up within it in empathetic activity.

This cannot mean, however, that beatitude consists simply in an act of the will. Saint Thomas makes it clear that it is the intellect that moves the will. *Ignoti nulla cupido*. Without intellect, even the freedom of the will would not be possible. Nevertheless, beatitude is an activity of the will, however necessarily grounded in knowledge, just as my empathetic delight in the mind of my friend is an act of my will, although of a will enlightened by knowledge. My mind goes forth to, and is active in, the mind of my friend only because I already know him sufficiently to enable this to happen. In my activity I have more intimate union with him than I could otherwise ever enjoy. To the extent of the empathetic activity, I live in him and he in me. Now, this unique, volitional experience of friendship may be recast, like all other experience, in the crucible and may emerge as aesthetic experience when I impose form upon the content of my mind in the aesthetic act. I could not have had this empathetic experience until I had seen my friend's eyes and heard his voice ; but, having had it, I may now aesthetically intuit his eyes and voice as having qualities that it is obviously impossible for me to describe without reference to our unique empathetic experience of friendship. Such aesthetic experience is therefore literally incommunicable by me to anyone else, to the extent that the empathetic experience has

<sup>1</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3, 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 3, 56.

been unique. It would be futile for me to paint my friend's portrait as I now see him, in the hope of someone else seeing what I now see in his face ; but if I could cause another person to have empathetic experience in my friend's mind similar to that which I have enjoyed, I should have done as much as I could do towards communicating my unique experience. It is possible that then my aesthetic expression might be, in some measure at least, communicated to the other person.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, however, empathetic experience cannot be communicated as can other experience ; it is the unique encounter of one personality with another. When I say that words cannot express the beauty of Lake Como, I use a rhetorical figure, and ought strictly to say that I have failed to find words to express it, which means something quite different ; but when I say that words cannot express the grief I have experienced at the loss of a friend, or my joy in meeting one again, what I say is literally true, if by "express" I mean, as one ordinarily does mean in such a context, "express in such a way as to communicate my expression to others". The experience I enjoy, or of which I have been deprived, is quasi-mystical. If there be mystical experience of God, it is this that is unutterable ; and it would seem, therefore, that of his inmost experience in the spiritual life, the mystic, despite his torrential eloquence, must of necessity remain silent.<sup>2</sup>

#### § 44. *Transition to our Main Inquiry*

Before proceeding to our next chapter, in which we are to embark upon the main inquiry, let us consider to what extent we have been able to solve the difficulties raised in the present one, and, in general, to take stock of the equipment with which we propose to attack our task.

Even those who may be reluctant to allow the reduction of aesthetic experience to the aesthetic fact as isolated by Croce, regarding this as an over-simplification of it, must surely concede that at

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 37, p. 93 ; *infra*, § 55, p. 150 f.

<sup>2</sup> Μύστικος, μυστικός, μυνέω from μύω, to close (eyes, ears, mouth, etc.). The root (μύ, μῦ) is pronounced by closing the lips. Cf. the English interjection *mum*, to evoke secrecy or silence.

least there appears to be in it an irreducible element, upon which seems to depend, and from which seems to begin, all other experience. For our part, we are content to identify aesthetic experience with Croce's aesthetic fact, while freely admitting, of course, that the term may also be used in a very much wider sense to include the practical work of art, involving many extremely intricate psychological and other problems. We believe, however, that none of these problems can be solved without an understanding of the unique and independent nature of the aesthetic fact as a fundamental mode of experience.

When we use terms such as "art" or "the aesthetic fact" or "aesthetic experience", we may mean (legitimately, if our meaning is clear) to speak loosely. We may mean, that is, a complex fact or experience or situation in which the aesthetic element seems to us to predominate, or that, for some reason, we focus our attention upon that element. We may look at a physical symbol, such as a picture, and say, in this convenient fashion: "How exquisite! That's what I call 'pure art'." If we were familiar with the technique of working with the medium in question, it is more likely that we should say: "But how clever! And he's got away with it, too! Why, it's *art*!" But of course in both cases, although our admiration must include reference to art in the strict sense, Croce's "aesthetic fact", it is only an indirect reference, as if we should say of our dessert, "Mine's a cherry," meaning only to distinguish our helping of blanc-mange, which has been so flavoured, from that of our neighbours, who call theirs "a lemon" and "an orange" respectively. Likewise, a distinguished barrister's defence in court might elicit from us the comment: "What an admirable piece of reasoning!" But, of course, in fact, the situation we admire and to which we directly refer is much more than the purely intellectual activity it contains. To this activity we refer only indirectly.

Quite strictly, however, the "aesthetic fact", according to our re-interpretation of the Crocean position, is simply that activity of mind which constitutes our first mode of awareness of reality, the ground of all we think and do. It is as distinct an experience, as *sui generis*, as the intellectual experience of certainty that two and two are four or that A is not not-A. But it is even more truly fundamental



and independent. If we muddle it with other experience, all our experience will be muddled. If it is weak, all our experience will be weak. It is, however, only aesthetic experience in this strict sense that is the basis of all other experience.

The reason for raising the difficulties with which we have dealt in the present chapter will not be fully apparent until we are *in mediis rebus*. But already the reader will have detected, from our intention to use Croce's aesthetic in a context from which the Crocean system seems to be alien, the need for some means of relating our aesthetic to our proposed inquiry. In our brief examination of certain aspects of Thomism, we have insisted on the impossibility of claiming that Thomas would have supported us had he been confronted with our difficulties in the light of modern knowledge. One might almost as well ask whether Moses would have preferred Palladian domes or Perpendicular towers. But we will go so far as to say that, as we believe the Crocean analysis of aesthetic experience to be true, we do not believe that one who so loved and sought truth as did Saint Thomas would have seriously opposed our view, in our circumstances. As his hymns alone suffice to show, not many philosophers have been better endowed with aesthetic taste and discrimination. The problem of beauty had not, however, urgently confronted him. But if we criticize him, it is in a very different way from that in which we should criticize a contemporary. It is only in this sense, at least as regards questions of great importance, that we deviate from him in interpreting the thought of those for whom he has been uniquely authoritative.

Aquinas seems, indeed, to have groped towards a distinction such as Croce makes between aesthetic and logical activity.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if the obviousness of the connection between sensory apprehension and reality prompted Thomas to equate the *species sensibilis* with the *forma realis*, we repudiate the equation, but not the motive. Our disagreement with Saint Thomas cannot be said to be radical; and our sympathy with him runs very deep. We have also found

<sup>1</sup> *S. Th.* 2-2, 180, 5 ad 2: "contemplatio humana secundum statum praesentis vitae non potest esse absque phantasmatibus . . . sed tamen intellectualis cognitio non consistit in ipsis phantasmatibus, sed in eis contemplatur puritatem intelligibilis veritatis". Cf. *De Ver.* 13, 3.

that on one very important point we could accept him almost unreservedly,<sup>1</sup> putting the language of modern aesthetics by the side of the scholastic idiom almost as a simple translation.

All that seems necessary to our argument at this point is the existence of an external world about which we can have some knowledge of a certain kind by intellectual (*i.e.* logical) reflection and in our reactions to moral situations, and that the reality of this experience, recast in the crucible, may be grasped in the aesthetic intuition. The aesthetic intuition remains, of course, a unique mode of experience; and in it we lay hold of reality in a unique way, that we have called the aesthetic. While the extent of our grip of the external world depends upon the higher abstractions we recast, the grip itself, by this unique mode of experience, depends simply upon our having pure (*i.e.* genuine) aesthetic activity. "Ordinary" perception grasps reality very defectively, being two modes of activity confused with each other. It is not only turgid: it is activity that has been paralysed to the extent that the two modes have been confused. And yet, such is everyday life that this "ordinary" perception is a useful device to cope with it.

It may help to make clear the precise nature of the aesthetic fact, which we call pure aesthetic intuition, if we refer in passing to a confusion on a larger scale, at least equally prevalent at the level of "ordinary" life. For "ordinary" perception is certainly not the only kind of muddled and semi-paralysed activity in which we indulge in everyday life, although this muddle generally contributes to the greater one. The greater muddle is the one between theoretical and practical activity, between knowledge and will. Certain kinds of society tend to encourage what is called "acting first and thinking afterwards", which means, of course, acting and thinking together — not merely together in time, which may be an admirable achievement if the activities are kept "pure" — but together in the sense that the distinction between the two activities tends to be erased. Plainly, this may be a very convenient habit for enabling the common man to shave while smoking a cigarette, listening to the news headlines, soothing a ruffled wife, or planning how to lay his bet for the day. In some circumstances it evidently

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 43, p. 114 ff.

can be very profitable in business. People who habitually and almost exclusively indulge in it may make what is superficially a display of sound reason and force of will ; but of course both their thought and their will are, through the confusion, blunted, distorted, and seriously diminished in vigour.<sup>1</sup> The genuine thinker must exercise a certain detachment in order to get back to "pure" intellectual reflection. This, then, is what we do, on a smaller canvas, when we get back from "ordinary" perception to the aesthetic fact, which is "pure" imagination, knowledge in its basic mode. In this respect the artist does only what the intellectual does, except that he goes one step further down, to the lowest rung of experience. There he has the most fundamental and the most sure grip of external reality.

Beyond this we do not mind being, for the moment, agnostic about the precise nature of the external world : that is, we do not probe the wider problems of epistemology. Our protest against Croce is chiefly against his tendency to conceive of the apprehension of reality as the vision of Narcissus ; and we find that Thomas, innocent as he is of modern aesthetic theory and in many respects unsophisticated in his theory of knowledge, looks at the external world in a manner with which in some respects modern knowledge and modern thought are becoming increasingly sympathetic.

We have now reached the point at which, having come to a conclusion as to the nature of aesthetic experience, and having tried to anticipate certain pitfalls and difficulties of interpretation, we may go on to the analysis of its function in religion. If we have succeeded in what we profess to have done, we need not apologize for having given half our space to doing it ; for, as we shall see, to have ascertained the nature of aesthetic experience is at least half the battle.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr. Bernard Shaw's profession of having a mind's eye which is exceptional because "normal," like his "normal" physical eyesight. His physician found the latter uninteresting because "normal", and the former contributed to Shaw's early literary failures, since, we are informed, he preferred to "see right on a pound a week than squint on a million". (Preface to *Plays Unpleasant*.)

## PART TWO

### CHAPTER FIVE

#### OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

##### § 45. *Is there an Independent Religious Mode of Experience?*

WE have seen how philosophers grappled with the problem of beauty for many centuries before they began to recognize this reflective exercise to be a special philosophical discipline. We have also noticed how, even after this had been done, the Crocean position was attained only after an arduous struggle. Croce solved this main problem by (a) isolating the fundamental aesthetic fact from the very complex experience that aesthetic activity entails, and from the even more complex experience with which it is usually entangled, and (b) establishing this isolated fact as the ground of all knowledge and activity, including morality.

It is perhaps natural that one should be tempted to seek a parallel method of solving the problem of the nature of religion. This would not, indeed, be an original course; for it is the main thesis of Otto's *Das Heilige* that the *numinous* is just such an independent experience. Following the philosophy of a little-known Kantian, Jakob Fries,<sup>1</sup> Otto developed a theory of the holy, as the object of religious consciousness, claiming that it consisted of what is called, in *Das Heilige*, a "rational" and "non-rational" element. Behind the "rational" element, which seeks a *rapprochement* with goodness, lies a "non-rational" category, neither moral nor aesthetic, but simply "numinous", that is, holy in a primeval sense of the term. It is this that leads to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Otto alleges that this numinous element is incapable of being unravelled: it is *unentwickelbar*. While the holy, as we ordinarily envisage it, is capable of analysis into component parts, this basic part of it cannot be so analysed, because it is a specific, funda-

<sup>1</sup> Jakob Fries published a "New Critique of Reason" in 1807.

mental, unique mode of experience, being *sui generis*.

The serious difficulties with which such a view confronts us do not particularly concern and need not long delay us. They have often been dealt with.<sup>1</sup> Why should that which is indefinable produce a definable emotion? Why, indeed, should that which produces a definable emotion be indefinable? At any rate, why should we give value to that which we call indefinable, unknown, and obscure? We know that our experience fades towards obscurity at its depths; and we have had to try to plumb these depths in the earlier part of our work, when we investigated the nature of aesthetic experience. But that this *dunkle Tiefe*, unanalysed and unanalysable, should be accorded independent value seems quite unwarranted.

Otto was much influenced by Schleiermacher, whose definition of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence is psychologically untenable, as well as otherwise notoriously inadequate. Feeling of any kind is much too loose and indefinite a phenomenon to be the basis of the highest experience we know. If all that must be entered under the head of religion could be interpreted as a genuine activity of mind in creaturely response to God, we might conceivably look for a solution by some process such as that outlined in *Das Heilige*. We shall see presently, however, that religion covers a much wider field of human experience.<sup>2</sup> As Otto purports to deal with all religious experience, the demand made on our credulity by the contention that it always contains some such supremely valuable element would be intolerable, even if every philosophical difficulty inherent in his hypothesis could be overcome. While Otto is one of the most stimulating theologians of recent times, his thesis is certainly not convincing; and when we presently consider the vast range of phenomena that must be classed as religious, it will be seen to be more unconvincing than ever. It would appear that the obscure depth in which Otto thought he had found the seat of all religious experience is as vague as Schleiermacher's "feeling", and is *unentwickelbar* merely because *unbekannt*.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. by Leonard Hodgson, *The Place of Reason in Christian Apologetics* (Blackwell, 1925), esp. Lecture I, p. 7 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, § 46.

· § 46. *The Scope of Religion*

We deny that there is any such unique mode of experience upon which a theory of religion can be established. Otto often reverts to animistic and other primitive forms of religion, to totem and taboo, to the cult of objects invested with *mana*; and he professes to find in this field the early modes of "rationalizing" a precedent, that is, numinous, experience to which they are subsidiary.<sup>1</sup> As religion develops, it becomes more "rational" and moral, a process which Otto describes in Kantian language as the "schematization of the category" of holiness; but, while the better the religion the more this happens, all religion has its roots in the numinous experience which can never be discarded, because it is the fundamental character of all religion.

But the varieties of religious experience are in fact inexhaustible; and the differences amongst them are as great as the differences within our experience of life itself. Here we find religion stubbornly conservative, and there fanatically revolutionary. In one situation Salomon Reinach's definition of religion as *un ensemble de scrupules qui font obstacle au libre exercice de nos facultés*<sup>2</sup> would be adequate, but in another quite irrelevant. In one case it might be wholly accounted for in terms of superstition, and in another chiefly characterized by an insistent protest against the superstitious. In one instance it might be found to be as amoral as human experience can be, and in another inextricably associated with the highest known morality. While it has generally a large range of component elements, the variation in their preponderance is almost unlimited. Attempts such as that of Baron von Hügel to ascertain the characteristic elements in religion, as analogous to the phases of childhood, adolescence, and maturity in the life of man, are illuminating in showing us that religion is conterminous with life itself, and does not merely stand in a special relationship to it.

Even within western Christendom there are marked divergences of informed opinion about what is genuine religious experience. When Max Müller embarked on his monumental work, he took

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige*, c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Orpheus* (ed. 1909), p. 5. M. Loisy criticizes this definition in *A propos d'histoire des religions*, p. 49 ff.

as his motto the dictum that to know one religion is to know no religion (*Wer eine Religion kennt, kennt keine*). Adolf Harnack, speaking of Christianity in his rectorial address at Berlin in 1907, retaliated by saying that to know *this* religion was to know all religions (*Wer diese Religion kennt, kennt alle*). In fact, neither proposition is strictly true; and neither the philological stature even of a Müller nor the dogmatic erudition of a Harnack could cope with so stupendous a field as religion, in the sense of fully knowing what it is. Truly to know religion would be at least to know everything that is to be known about mankind. But if any of the objects claimed as real by religious experience is accepted as real, the task must also include a knowledge of these objects, and of not only the cardinal relationship between these objects and mankind, but the whole gamut of intricate relationships arising out of such religious facts. In short, fully to know religion would be to master the universe.

If we look beyond Christendom, and consider all that has ever anywhere been accounted religion, we shall find that the term is hopelessly indeterminate. Animal totemism, for instance, may astonish us; but it is interwoven into even European civilization, and has been mingled with Christianity in curious ways. We find traces of it in mediaeval bestiaries, which may have a very devotional and moral character.<sup>1</sup> While the cow is taboo to the Hindus and the pig to Jewry and Islam, the dog is taboo, at least in respect of edibility, in Europe. The Yezidis are said to have no precept to pray, because they believe that Melak Tâ'ûs is sufficiently powerful and beneficent to save them without it; and their commandments concern cleanliness rather than godliness;<sup>2</sup> but what can we call their festivals and pilgrimages, if not religious? Tornarsuk, the Eskimo devil-god, is too much of a bogey to be the object of anything we should call worship; but when the Eskimo solemnly tears up his discarded clothes lest Tornarsuk should wear them, and thus be warm and comfortable enough to plague the community, his action may be regarded as of a religious character.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* the *Physiologus* of Bishop Theobald, supposed to have been Abbot of Monte Cassino, 1022-1035. This bestiary was printed at Cologne in 1492.

<sup>2</sup> R. H. W. Empson, *The Cult of the Peacock Angel*, p. 79.

Even if one were to adopt a loose definition of religion that would meet with some widespread acceptance, such as that it consists of the traffic of mankind with God, it would be not only vague, but still inadequate; for it would exclude, for instance, theosophies which envisage the religious relationship not as traffic between God and man, but as the acquisition of knowledge by mankind. But apart from such theosophies, claiming to be religion *par excellence* while ignoring what is for Christianity the most elementary mark of religious experience, namely, prevenient grace, it would be indeed a bold optimism that would suppose religion to be even generally described as the groping after such traffic. The vast body of Christianity itself in every age and country is mingled with local, ancestral, and extraneous superstition, often of the grossest character. Religion that is conventional in the worst sense is, as Bergson has reminded us, a perversion of a once living reality. Even oaths, Santayana says, are but the "fossils of piety"; and although much sanctimonious conversation may be little better than "bad language" it would hardly be permissible to exclude it on that account from the sphere of religion.

As Professor Webb observes, "When we turn to consider definitions of Religion which have been given by eminent writers we shall find that they usually presuppose for the understanding of them the very knowledge which they are supposed to impart".<sup>1</sup> Professor Webb cites Matthew Arnold's definition, well known for its extreme inadequacy, that religion is "morality touched with emotion," and Reinach's definition, quoted above, and shows that the words "emotion" and "scruple" respectively must be prefixed by the word "religious", thereby destroying the definitive character of the alleged definitions.

There are, it is true, certain manifestations that would be very widely accepted as having religious value, even for those who do not adhere to the particular church or communion that fostered them. Most people would recognize certain prayers and certain devotional literature as religious. But what is most precious to one religious tradition is often held in another to be the hallmark of irreligion. It was affirmed, for example, in the Glasgow

<sup>1</sup> C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 4.



Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland as recently as 1942, that the broadcast of Christmas Midnight Mass from Ampleforth Abbey was the cause of the fall of Hong Kong to the Japanese a few hours later. Even where there appears to be fairly wide agreement on what constitutes religion, there is still great disparity of opinion as to the comparative value or importance of particular manifestations of it. To take an extreme case, two Frenchwomen educated at the same convent may put emphases on the devotional place of Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux so divergent as to give the whole devotional tone of the one a *nuance* quite distinguishable from that of the other.

### § 47. *Catholic Mysticism*

One can see from the findings of the preceding section that to discuss the function of aesthetic experience in religion might mean to discuss the function of aesthetic experience in an indeterminate range of situations that are practically conterminous with life ; and apart from the patent impossibility of the task, its results would be in any case of very limited value. While one may study religion in this way in order to ascertain psychological or anthropological facts, one must study it from a very different angle in order to throw much light upon any question in which religion itself is part of the problem we desire to interpret. One cannot obtain any result of value to religion as a whole except by taking up a viewpoint within a specific religious field. One cannot inspect religion as one can the objects studied by botany or astronomy. Even the account of a savage for whom religion is largely the propitiation of deceased and irate ancestors may be more illuminating than a supposedly detached exposition of what purports to be the whole field of religious experience.

Mysticism in its widest sense has its origin in the raw material of all religion. It has been rightly said to be probably the most important form of religious experience. But it is capable of many interpretations, and means many very different things. Dean Inge quotes twenty-six definitions of it in a list that is not, and does not purport to be, exhaustive.<sup>1</sup> McTaggart<sup>2</sup> classifies mystical systems

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophical Studies*.

by reference to their assertion of mystical unity extending (*a*) over the whole universe or (*b*) over part of the universe. If we choose (*b*) we have still to choose among systems which (1) regard the unity as between God and (*a*) all other spirits or (*β*) certain other spirits distinguished by wisdom, virtue, or divine favour, and those which (2) regard the unity as amongst (*a*) all finite spirits without reference to God, or among (*β*) some finite spirits without reference to God.

What we propose to examine, however, is no such unbounded, straggling wilderness, but a very neatly walled garden. In Catholicism we find a specific theological soil that has been skilfully tilled for many centuries and in which mysticism flowers spontaneously in a rich and gracious tradition of order and liturgy. This highly cultivated tradition does not deliberately foster mysticism; but it treats it not unkindly when it appears. The general attitude and approach of mystics in this tradition is well known; but even within its confines there is a distinct and in many respects fundamental type of mysticism, which Dom Cuthbert Butler, in his admirable study,<sup>1</sup> calls "Western Mysticism", opposing it to mysticism in the west. To this tradition we must pay particular attention when we seek to interpret the Catholic mystics, for it is a tradition so fundamental to Catholicism that no later traditions that are at all recognizably Catholic have ever loosed themselves from its moorings, nor could they have done. In the wide, Catholic tradition, the types of mystic and the tempo of their approach vary greatly; but the language of any Catholic mystic is easily recognizable. They all speak of an experience that is quite non-sensory, and incommunicable in human language. If pressed to describe it as nearly as possible in the language of man, they may sometimes answer enigmatically that it is like "seeing a sound" or "hearing a vision". They are perhaps most explicit when they say, as they all do, that, if we insist on knowing the most nearly analogous experience familiar to humanity at its highest, we may think of it as an experience of love; but they never fail to remind us that any description in human language is certain to be misleading, because the experience is radically incommunicable.

<sup>1</sup> *Western Mysticism* (2nd ed., with "Afterthoughts", Constable, 1927).

On the other hand, the great mystics do write voluminously about their experience. In these writings they cover their pages with descriptions in terms of singularly vivid imagery, while protesting at the turn of every page against any possible misconception of the mystical experience as an imaginative or sensory one. It will surprise no-one who has ever heard with sympathy the artists' and the mystics' case to be told that between aesthesis and the mystical experience there is a very wide gulf indeed. The mystics insist that their experience, far from being analogous to aesthesis, is not even like it. If it is to be likened to any ordinary human experience, they say, let it be likened to the least sensory of all ordinary human experience, namely, the experience of the highest and purest human love and friendship. Here, if we must have one, is the best analogy we can get. Nevertheless, the mystics, if they are to write at all, must write of the sensory, trying, as best they may, to describe their experience through the medium of aesthetic symbols. They speak, therefore, of light, but "another light", of fragrance, but "another fragrance". Now, the highest and purest human love and friendship, *φιλία*, the best analogy that we are offered, can also be described only in such a way. It was, in fact, so described long before mystical experience was ever described at all; and no-one ever supposed that the aesthetic symbols of *φιλία* were important descriptions of its *nature*, or that *φιλία* depended on them for its efficacy. We need not expect them to do for mystical experience what they cannot do even for that which the mystics almost reluctantly offer us as its least misleading human analogue.

It is true, however, that the finite things we dimly grasp through aesthesis are, considered as *entia*, in some way analogous to the *Summum Ens*. Because this is so, we use the ideas of them for the *analogical* contemplation of God. It will be legitimate to inquire, therefore, in what way, if any, they play a part in mystical experience, in spite of the apparent denials by the mystics that they play any part. The philosophical position we have reached in our earlier chapters makes it necessary for us to add a refinement to the traditional Catholic view of such analogical "ideas". In discursive thinking about theology, one may be content with using

these analogical "ideas", and with talking about them, as concepts ; but for contemplative purposes this will not suffice. For contemplative purposes any "ideas" used in analogy to God will have to be vigorously intuited : if they are merely thought about discursively, the activity cannot be called contemplative. It follows, therefore, that *if* the mystics use in their contemplation any such analogical "ideas" at all, they use aesthetic intuitions. It seems to us probable that they do use these "ideas" ; but whether this is so depends, of course, on the general question what part is played by analogy in our thought, both in our general thought and, more especially, in our thought about God. To this general question we must therefore devote a large part of the remainder of the present chapter, before we try to interpret what the mystics say about the nature of their experience.

#### § 48. *The Rational Ground of Catholic Theology*

Before plunging into a discussion of analogy, as used in general, and, more especially, theological argument, it will help to sharpen the point of such a discussion if we look very briefly at a possible objection to the Catholic tradition that uses and encourages the use of analogical thought and rational discussion about God.

It would not be difficult to find artists impatient of any rational discussion of beauty. Impressed by the aesthetic fact as they claim to have known it, they would view any intellectual reflection upon it as unprofitable. The most that may be offered as an aesthetic, they would say, is an exposition of what artists have claimed to find in art. They might look, moreover, with a not wholly groundless suspicion on the intellectual antics of persons skilled in philosophy but, at the best, undistinguished in art. Likewise, many persons, impressed by the religious fact as they claim to have known it, and keenly aware of the danger of its being taken for something which it is not, view with dismay all rational reflection upon religion. Conscious of a revelation without which they would have had no faith in God, they can see nothing to be gained from a rational discussion upon religion. Such persons would also say that, in view of the peculiar character of their claims, which they are

prepared to state with some degree of elaboration, no relation between the object of their experience and that of sensory experience can be discussed, nor any rational analogy between them entertained.<sup>1</sup>

But we should heed the protests of the latter class of persons no more than those of the former. We consult artists to inform us about aesthetic experience ; and we consult mystics to inform us about mystical experience. But although not many of us would pretend to be artists in the sense in which we should confer that title upon a Giotto or a Dante or a Mozart, most of us would say that at least we know after some fashion what we have been discussing in the earlier part of our work. Very few persons would claim to be mystics in the sense in which we apply that term to a Catherine of Genoa or a John of the Cross ; and, no doubt, not many would claim to be mystics at all. But most intelligent churchmen would admit that, in spite of this, they are aware, in reading a mystical treatise, that it is not about nothing, although it is about something of which they claim only the most hazy experience. Now, if this is so, how can they know that the mystics are not talking sheer nonsense ? The answer would seem to be that they know analogically.

Analogical thought plays a very large part in all reasoning ; and it is an integral part of all orthodox Catholic theology to apply analogical methods in discourse about God. We regard it as of vital importance to our main argument to demonstrate the necessity of this rational ground in Catholic theology, in the tradition of which the Catholic mystics have been so nurtured that their mysticism would have been something radically different without it. But, as we shall see, we have a double purpose in this : not only to show that there is some kind of bridge, however fragile, between the finite things we so dimly grasp through aesthesis and the object of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Karl Barth, for example, explains his acceptance of the *analogia fidei* of Rom. xii, 6 (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1/1, c. 1, s. 6, 4, 2 ; p. 257) ; but he rejects the *analogia entis* as "the invention of Antichrist" (*op. cit.*, *Vorwort*) : "Ich halte die *analogia entis* für die Erfindung des Antichrist und denke, dass man ihretwegen nicht katholisch werden kann. Wobei ich mir zugleich erlaube, alle anderen Gründe, die man haben kann, nicht katholisch zu werden, für kurz-sichtig und unernsthaft zu halten."

the mystical experience, but that we may be under no misapprehension as to the limitation of such analogical method.

### § 49. *The Validity of Analogical Method*

We need hardly say that it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to show that God is. Our concern is not even what he is. The mystics inform us to some extent what they have found him to be. It is true that they have often confessed themselves unable to tell us as well as they should have liked, and that they have been more ready to say what he is not than what he is ; for that, as every theologian knows, is easier. Nevertheless, we know that they tell us something ; and what now immediately concerns us is to discover how we can know this while disclaiming any experience parallel to theirs. The first step in such a process is an examination of analogical method in general.

Perhaps the simplest example of analogical argument is that which is applied to quantitative relationships. The relationship between  $x$  and  $y$  is declared to be analogous to the relationship between  $ax$  and  $ay$ .<sup>1</sup> But Aristotle also recognized analogy in respect of qualitative relationships, that is, any kind of relationships, other than quantitative ones, between two sets of terms. So, when Keats dreams that

haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays,<sup>2</sup>

we are informed that the relationship between the moon as seen on a starry night and the stars as they appear around it is like the relationship between a queen as she sits in her royal court and her ladies as they surround her. It is, however, only the relationships that are analogous. In itself the moon is not in the least like any female royal person. But it is equally true that 4 is not in the least like 26, although the relation in which 4 stands to 6 is analogous to the relation in which 26 stands to 39. Of course, all such

<sup>1</sup> Excepting "Napier's Analogies" in spherical geometry, mathematicians now use the term "proportions" for such quantitative analogies.

<sup>2</sup> *Ode to a Nightingale*.

analogies are based on presuppositions. The quantitative analogy, for instance, presupposes that numbers behave in a certain way. Analogies are intended to suggest hypotheses rather than to establish independent proof.

The schoolmen made considerable use of analogical argument. What, precisely, is its basis and validity as used by them? They were not in complete agreement amongst themselves about the manner in which one might legitimately use it. Duns Scotus, for instance, maintaining the univocity of being, calls univocal every concept that has enough unity to yield a basis for a contradiction. But to say that the concept "being" is univocal is simply to say that it is being that is attributed to both God and Man, in spite of the diversity between God's nature and man's. Even Thomas does not fully clear up the basis of the analogy; but he is probably more explicit on the question than other schoolmen. In the *analogia entis* we have analogy *par excellence*, and this is grounded on the philosophical starting-point that every being, to the extent that it truly exists, is distinct from every other being. Existence is not the only term that can be predicated of a being. A being may have essence, genera, species, and other means by which it may be differentiated from other beings; but, isolating the mere act of existing as that which is to be pre-eminently predicated of being, we must still say that one being is different from every other. This means that when we speak of "being" we cannot mean being-A and being-B and being-C; for A, B, and C are all different beings, even in the act of existing. The term "being" cannot, therefore, be used univocally. But, on the other hand, while being-A and being-B and being-C are all irreducible to one another, they all agree in that they are all acts of existing. It is here that there is an analogy, which is equivocal, but not wholly equivocal. If it were wholly equivocal it would not be an analogy at all. The *analogia entis* does not say, therefore, that the relationship between God and his divine being is analogous to the relationship between man and his being; but it does say that at any rate they agree in that they both exist. Applied, as it is, in a case of beings who are as disproportionate as can be to one another, the *analogia entis* affirms that, nevertheless, there is this proportionality.

The analogy is an *analogia proportionalitatis* ; and it is extremely important to recognize its limits as such.

It is a commonplace that mysticism is constantly exposed to the danger of degenerating into an easy, smug pantheism which would rob it of every characteristic that makes it mystical in the sense in which we use the term. But this degeneration takes place when, instead of placing God and man in the analogical relationship we have described, mysticism allows itself to ignore the distinction between one being and another, and to assert that God and other beings are all "being", and that therefore, because both God and being are the same and man and being are the same, God and man may be somehow identified. Such a degenerate view can arise only by ignoring or misunderstanding the *analogia entis*, the first concern of which is to raise a rigid barrier between God and man.

But Saint Thomas is able to make use of analogy on other questions, too, although not without the limitations already imposed by the *analogia entis*. When he considers whether there is any respect in which man may be said to resemble God, such as wisdom or goodness, he again uses analogical argument. Here, however, it is causal analogy. Why should we suppose, if we do suppose it, that man's wisdom is at all like the wisdom of God? If we are satisfied that they are not wholly dissimilar, to what extent are we to admit a likeness? To answer such questions, Thomas begins with God as the First Cause, from whom flow effects, such as man. But why should an effect resemble its cause? Saint Thomas considers physical causes and their effects. Once again it would be easy (and it has been commonly done, not only in primitive thought) to put an almost unlimited reliance on the likeness that must arise between a cause and its effects. But here again a scrupulously cautious analogy prevents any such *abandon*. We examine the kind of likeness that we have in a physical cause and its effects. If I consider the case of my blood I find that it has a certain temperature which I know is ultimately due to the sun. Broadly speaking, I should find it very odd to affirm any similarity between my blood and the sun ; but, on reflection, I discover that the dissimilarity is not complete. God, considered as our Creator, may be said to be the cause of us. But he is the First



Cause, so that all that is not God has him for its cause. He is the cause, for instance, of physical causality. The act of divine creation, therefore, stands in the same kind of relationship to physical causality that divine being stands to beings. When we investigate how far man's wisdom resembles God's wisdom, we find an immeasurable gulf between them ; but, on the other hand, we observe that some analogy is permissible. It is permissible for us to call God wise and to call man wise without having to say that "wise" means something *wholly* different in each case ; but, nevertheless, we insist that it means very far from the same thing. It is a usage not wholly equivocal, but certainly not univocal.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the being of the creature/effect is itself only analogous to the being of the Creator/Cause ; and the analogy between man's wisdom and God's wisdom is therefore not merely the analogy between effect and cause ; for it is only an analogy between analogues. Even that, however, is enough to preclude us from saying, as has been said,<sup>2</sup> that the word "wise" used in the one case has no relationship at all with the same word used in the other case. That which is predicated of God in such cases is, of course, the sovereign analogue.

Having examined the nature of analogical method in general,

<sup>1</sup> *S. Th.* I, 13, 5 : "Impossibile est aliquid praedicari de Deo et creaturis univoce. Quia omnis effectus non adaequans virtutem causae agentis, recipit similitudinem agentis non secundum eandem rationem, sed deficienter ; ita ut quod divisim et multipliciter est in effectibus, in causa est simpliciter et eodem modo ; sicut Sol secundum unam virtutem multiformes et varias formas in istis inferioribus producit. . . . Sic igitur, cum aliquod nomen ad perfectionem pertinet de creatura dicitur, significat illam perfectionem distinctam secundum rationem definitionis ab aliis ; puta, cum hoc nomen *sapiens* de homine dicitur, significamus aliquam perfectionem distinctam ab essentia hominis, et a potentia, et ab esse ipsius, et ab omnibus hujusmodi ; sed cum hoc nomen de Deo dicimus, non intendimus significare aliquid distinctum ab essentia, vel potentia, vel esse ipsius. Et sic cum hoc nomen *sapiens* de homine dicitur, quodammodo describit et comprehendit rem significatam, non autem cum dicitur de Deo ; sed relinquit rem significatam ut incomprehensam, et excedentem nominis significationem. Unde patet quod non secundum eandem rationem hoc nomen *sapiens* de Deo et de homine dicitur. Et eadem ratio est de aliis. Unde nullum nomen univoce de Deo et creaturis praedicatur."

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Karl Barth, for instance, would say that man's wisdom has as little to do with God's wisdom as has man's foolishness.

and especially of its use in scholastic philosophy, one may now very properly object that while it may be a permissible, useful, and even necessary device in discussing problems concerning God and man, and in positing hypotheses about God, it has not been shown that we can in fact have any analogical knowledge of God that has practical religious significance. We now consider this question.

### § 50. *Analogical Knowledge of God*

No-one has ever seen God.<sup>1</sup> What, then, do we mean when we say, without claiming mystical experience, that there is a sense in which we know him ?

Let us begin by considering a commonplace experience. If we define old age as being over, let us say, seventy, then no-one who has not yet reached that age has any experience of old age. Especially must we say that a man in his twenties or thirties has no experience of it. But a man of thirty is not completely ignorant of what this old age is. He does not know it as does the septuagenarian, but only in a very imperfect manner. Even this would be impossible for him but for the fact that he has some natural affinity with old age himself. Without this, however, the state of old age would be to him a complete enigma, and no reflection or sensitiveness could help him to understand it. But because of this natural affinity, it is not an enigma to him ; and the natural affinity arises from the fact, among others, that already at the age of thirty and in the fulness of youth he has had a slight experience of growing old. Nevertheless, if he were quite unreflective, he would neither be able in any way to contemplate the disabilities of old age and sympathize with the aged, nor would he appreciate at all the peculiar advantages of that state. He knows old age only by analogy ; but he could not know it at all without some natural affinity with it such as we have mentioned.

It is a fundamental position of Thomism that we know God naturally by analogy ; but the limits of this knowledge are apparent from the limits placed upon analogical method in the foregoing

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv, 12.

section.<sup>1</sup> We know that God is not, in our meaning of the terms, foolish or spiteful or mean ; and we know that he is wise and good, not in our meaning of the terms, but in a way indeed remote from them ; but this we know only because an affinity between us and God is not wholly lacking, although it is warped. In theology the affinity is accounted for by the *Imago Dei* and the warping by the Fall. Our natural intellection of God is easier for us when God's wisdom and goodness do not directly confront us (for then, like Moses, we should have to turn away our dazzled eyes, and should apprehend nothing), but are obscured and seen in the dim and distorted mirror of the wisdom and goodness we know. We do not thus know God quidditatively.<sup>2</sup> We can say no more than that we know him analogically. Rising by reflection to the best we know of what being should be, we know that our concept is, however slightly, nearer to the concept of God than it was when we were thinking of what our being is. Likewise, when we think of the highest wisdom we can conceive, we know that we are thinking of something at least less remote from the wisdom of God than what passes for wisdom in ordinary parlance. So we escape agnosticism about God without, so far, claiming to know even what he is.

The charge of anthropomorphism which may be raised against such analogical intellection of God is not lightly to be put aside. In making our ascent as described we cannot truly rise from beings to "Being" or from the wisdom of beings to the "Wisdom of Being". For the only being I know and the only wisdom I know without analogy is my own being and wisdom. I have to apply the method of analogy to some extent even in my knowledge of other beings. Our young man's knowledge of the septuagenarian is only an example of the kind of process in which we engage when-

<sup>1</sup> Of course, as soon as the traditional analogical arguments become substitutes for the apprehension of God they become sophisms. They are only statements of the created relations in which we apprehend him. But it is only by the use of such analogy that we can apprehend the unique relation of creativity itself. For a full discussion of this question, see the first part of Dr. Austin Farrer's *Finite and Infinite* (Dacre Press, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> "Quidditative" is a scholastic adjective from the question *quid est?* To know God quidditatively is to know what he is.

ever we consider the mode of another being, however like ourselves he is presumed to be. What content, then, are we to ascribe to him who is *Actus Purus* that will not be anthropomorphic, however vigorous our analogy? This is an objection that we consider neither wholly refutable nor wholly irrefutable; for it is the peculiar character of analogical intellection that it must present to us, if it present anything at all, both a lower and the sovereign analogue. We have no difficulty in apprehending a lower analogue, for example, in thinking anthropomorphically; but we apprehend the sovereign analogue only after an extremely obscure fashion. We see it as through opaque glass: *videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps in analogical intellection not even as well as that;<sup>2</sup> but, nevertheless, *videmus*.

All this, let us repeat, is not intended to raise the question of proof either of God's existence or of his nature. We only exhibit how, in our experience, analogical knowledge functions, and the kind of knowledge that it is. Nor, indeed, do we claim that analogical or any other intellection is possible without divine aid. What we do claim is that it is just as possible for us to have some kind of analogical intellection of God as it is for us to have it of other beings. Of course, it is a much easier affair to apprehend by this means the mind of the man who has engaged us in conversation in a railway compartment; for analogical knowledge is determined by affinity.

### § 51. *Analogical Knowledge of God by Faith*

We have considered man reaching out by reason, not unaided by God, but no more aided than in any other rational activity, to attain some knowledge of God; and we have contended that in spite of the immeasurable limits of such rational, analogical knowledge, it is, as knowledge, not nothing. In it, although we apprehend so little, we are not wholly deceived. When, however, man is confronted by certain propositions about the object of the highest exercise of his analogical powers, he must either accept or reject

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii, 12.

<sup>2</sup> For we may suppose that Saint Paul was speaking of a mode of experience of God deeper than that of analogical intellection, although still earthly.

them ; and his response depends on how they illuminate his present knowledge. We might think of ourselves, although any such example is inevitably inadequate, as having seen fragments of a shrivelled mummy patched together, and being then confronted by a young man full of life, whom we recognize to be the Pharaoh we had constructed from the best that Egyptology could supply. We should know, in such circumstances, how sadly inadequate had been our image of the Pharaoh ; but we should not have recognized the living man at all if we had not already seen the withered, reconstructed mummy that gave us an inkling of what to expect. Nevertheless, when we did see the living man, we should also realize how absurdly inadequate had been our image of the Pharaoh.

The experience of affirmatively responding to divine revelation is called in theology " faith ". But as in this experience we apprehend God neither by aesthesis nor noesis, our apprehension is still by analogy, although it is an analogy that must be said to be more directly initiated by God. It is not ordinary analogical knowledge ; but it is necessarily grounded upon ordinary analogical knowledge. Otherwise we could not call it knowledge, as, with Thomas, we do.<sup>1</sup> Unless by ordinary analogical knowledge we knew whether to expect God to be more like the most efficient policeman or more like the best R.A.C. guide we could imagine, it would mean nothing to us to be informed by revelation that he comes to us as the Good Shepherd.

Nevertheless, although faith is thus knowledge, it is still only analogical knowledge (we only " know in faith "), and so in faith we do not know God quidditatively ; for analogical knowledge by faith is still grounded in our ordinary images and concepts. God would not look like a good shepherd if in any way we could see him. Moreover, we must not fail to observe that in faith the analogy itself is revealed.

### § 52. *Mystical Intellection*

Although we have not yet heard the mystics' case,<sup>2</sup> it is already possible for us, to some extent, to consider the philosophical basis

<sup>1</sup> " Fides cognitio quaedam est, in quantum intellectus determinatur per fidem ad aliquod cognoscibile " (*S. Th.* 1, 12, 13 ad 3). <sup>2</sup> *Infra*, c. 6, p. 154 ff.

of their experience, and the place we are to assign to it in relation to the kinds of analogical knowledge we have just been discussing.

The Catholic mystics certainly claim a knowledge of God much more specific and direct than that which we have considered in the immediately preceding sections. It is not analogical knowledge of any kind. Analogical knowledge is not even like it. If pressed to say what kind of knowledge within ordinary experience might be said to be most like it, the mystics would no doubt have to say "seeing" or "tasting".<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, with the "eye of the mind" that the mystic "sees"; but what this means we have still to ascertain.

Jacques Maritain, in *Les Degrés du savoir*, treats this kind of knowledge in its relation to other kinds. His work is so valuable and apposite to our problem that we propose now to consider two chapters of it in some detail. We shall also refer to some points elaborated in the appendices of his work.<sup>2</sup>

### § 53. *Mystical Experience and Philosophy*<sup>3</sup>

Maritain leaves us in no doubt that by "mystical experience" he means no mysteriously vague religious phenomena, but simply the *pati divina* of Saint Thomas, portrayed by Saint John of the Cross, whose mystical experience Maritain regards as in complete harmony with Thomism.

Although Saint Thomas sometimes calls this *pati divina* quasi-experience, to preserve the fact of the divine transcendence, Maritain prefers to insist that, while our knowledge of God cannot be *absolutely* immediate except in the Beatific Vision, the *pati divina* is *relatively*, but truly experience. Maritain speaks of three forms of wisdom (*sagesse*), by which is meant "a supreme knowledge (*savoir suprême*) having a universal object and making judgments

<sup>1</sup> So Saint Gregory says: "Saporem incircumscriptae veritatis contemplatione subita subtiliter degustamus" (*Moralium*, 5, 26, 66; Migne, *P.L.*, vol. 75, col. 716). The most privileged experiences of Moses are described as "seeing God" (e.g. Num. xii, 8). The pure in heart are to "see" God. (Matt. v, 8).

<sup>2</sup> These appendices are to be found only in the original French text.

<sup>3</sup> An examination of *Les Degrés du savoir*, c. 6 (*Expérience mystique et philosophie*) (ed. Paris, 1932).

from first principles". These forms of wisdom are therefore all contrasted with knowledge of the particular. We begin with the lowest, (a) metaphysical wisdom, proceeding from visible and created things, whose ultimate reason it seeks, to God.<sup>1</sup> Such knowledge of God is analogical. Maritain calls it *ananoetic*. It seems to be natural to our being to be driven upwards when confronted with objects on the same plane as ourselves : these act as an incentive (*une amorce, un piège*) to what is essential in us, the *νοῦς*. Above this stands (b) knowledge of the revealed mysteries, which is rooted in faith. From faith it receives its first principles ; but it proceeds, nevertheless, according to the sequence of reason, that is, it is set out in a body of theological doctrine. It also is analogical ; but faith accommodates to our weakness a knowledge of which the formal rule (*veritas prima revelans*) is absolutely above us. So, Maritain argues, faith always has at least the root of unconditioned desire for that mystical contemplation to which it cannot itself attain. But above both these forms of wisdom stands (c) infused wisdom, by which we not only apprehend but endure the divine things—*patri divina*. This is a wisdom directly given by the Holy Spirit.

One of the bases of mystical experience is sanctifying grace, which makes us *consortes divinae naturae*. Even in the Beatific Vision the beatified creature cannot be divine and have the divine as his essence ; but, by participating formally in the nature of the infinite, he will have more than any pantheism could offer, namely, God transcendent. Mystical experience is the radical principle of which the Beatific Vision is the full flower.

As was proclaimed by the fourth Lateran Council,<sup>2</sup> there can never be between Creator and creature as much likeness as unlikeness. So, while grace leaves us, in our order of being, wholly and infinitely distant from the Pure Act, it is, in the order of spiritual operations and of relation to the object, a formal participation in the divine nature. However, it does not supplant, but perfects nature (*gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*) : it is out of the depths

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i, 20.

<sup>2</sup> "Inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest esse tanta similitudo quam sit semper major dissimilitudo notanda."

of our nature, as raised up by grace, that possibilities ordinarily inaccessible to our nature arise.

The effect of sanctifying grace is that the Triune God inhabits our souls ontologically, so that we may possess him in what Saint Thomas calls "free enjoyment". We have a fruitful, experiencing love and a knowledge that unites us with the Triune God not at a distance, but in truth ; and this is the gift of the Triune God.<sup>1</sup> Nor is this inhabitation given as a mere token of eternal life : it is its true beginning.<sup>2</sup> Mystical experience is the normal and right end of human life.

Mystical experience is a manner of knowledge by connaturality. To illustrate the meaning of this, Maritain takes an example from Saint Thomas. We may know chastity in two ways : (a) by having a moral consciousness of it that enables us to make the right response to a given situation, and (b) by having it so rooted in our faculties (as it were, "grown into our bones") that we respond by our immediate inclination, as having become connatural with chastity. Sanctifying grace makes us radically connatural with God in the sense that in the infused charity by which it flowers we may progress from the objective means of knowledge, the *objectum quo*, to the *objectum quod*, that is, we may experience not only our love of God, but also God himself in our love. To assure the possibility of this development, there must be in the soul in a state of grace permanent dispositions or *habitus*, like filaments delicately sensitive to God.

The mystics describe mystical experience as a state of passivity because it is a free operation in which the soul does not act on its own initiative, but is raised to a higher direction, reorientated by the work of the Holy Spirit. Having gone beyond the method of concepts and analogies, mystical experience can be called immediate. It makes no use of intermediary images drawn from creatures, says Maritain ; but he reminds us that our ordinary processes of mind are not obliterated. They have grown silent, as the apostles slept on the Mount of Olives. What is obliterated is the distinct use of conceptual formulas as a formal means of knowing. That which remains, although "silent", is, we may suppose, primarily the

<sup>1</sup> 1 *Sent.* dist. 14, 2, 2 ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii, 2 ; 1 Cor. vi, 19.



intuition of particulars through the senses. It is extremely important to remember that the reality lovingly contemplated for itself, which is claimed to be laid hold of in mystical experience, is not grasped in a mental vacuum. The process by which we ordinarily attain to knowledge of the particular is there ; but it is " silent " in respect of its normal function of apprehending through the senses. It is, presumably, reorientated towards its new, non-sensory object ; for its powers have been transformed to make this possible.

Maritain enters here into a discussion of the possibility of natural mysticism, which does not much concern us. But we may note his observation that it is possible to have mystical experience outside Christianity only to the extent that it is possible outside Christianity to belong unwittingly and invisibly to the Church, and so have faith and sanctifying grace. Moreover, the high regard in which mystical experience is held by many of the persons who profess it outside Christianity, and the readiness of their poetic expressions of it, may deceive us as to the stage they have in fact reached. One might find a parallel in the case of persons of scholarly disposition who may thereby deceive us about their academic attainment.

But when Maritain proceeds to consider how far there are in the natural order analogies of mystical experience, he goes to the core of our problem. All forms of natural knowledge by intuition, sympathy, or connaturality he readily admits to be more or less distant analogies of mystical experience. The poet or artist is more prepared than any other man to know the divine, because, although not connaturalized to God, he is at least in the way of being connaturalized to " the mystery that comes from God and is scattered through everything ". Here we think Maritain may be allowing a facile analogy between mystic and artist from which one would have expected his awareness of its inherent danger to have saved him. At least let us say that he does not seem sufficiently to warn us of the danger, when he makes the analogy. For the artist as such is not concerned with mysteries scattered through the universe. He is concerned with the intuition of particular objects. That this intuition may be connected with mystical experience we eagerly concede ; for this is the thesis we desire to establish. But we deny any simple transition from aesthetic to mystical experience on the

grounds of a common preoccupation with an object.

When, however, in the next paragraph, Maritain makes a clear analogy between mystical experience and human love, "the most natural of all the natural analogies" of mysticism, and used as its current tongue, we are in complete accord with him. We are also sensitive to the warning he issues in a footnote<sup>1</sup> of the danger of taking up an analogy between essentially distinct terms, as where one analogue is divine by participation and the other exposed to the possibility of sin (*peccamineux*). If grace informs profane love, it becomes something quite different. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there is here as good an analogy as there can be in the circumstances, because love is always, except in the figurative way in which one is said to love books or a garden, directed towards the mind of a human being, however it may be grounded in aesthetic experience. And when we may be said truly to love another human being we are in a relationship to him so analogous to the relationship of a mystic to God that the saturation of mystical literature with this word is to be expected, for no other word is so apposite. Aesthetic experience, however intimately connected with mystical experience, is not connected with it in this way. It may have an even more profound relationship, but that remains to be discovered; and there are other questions to be answered before we can draw any conclusions upon this one.

### § 54. *Speculative and Practical "Knowledge"*

Alongside communicable knowledge, Maritain tells us, is another and incommunicable knowledge; and, as instances of masters of these two kinds of knowledge, he cites, respectively, Saint Thomas Aquinas as "Doctor of the Light" and Saint John of the Cross as "Doctor of the Night".

Maritain then opens a somewhat involved but invaluable discussion on speculative and practical knowledge. By practical knowledge, of which, following Aristotle, he gives as his examples ethics,

<sup>1</sup> *Les Degrés du savoir*, section 35, p. 559, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> An examination of *Les Degrés du savoir*, c. 8 (*Saint Jean de la Croix, praticien de la contemplation*). (ed. cit.).

politics, and economics, Maritain means knowledge which is applied, not in order to know, but in order to act, and in which ends play the part of principles. Against Kant he insists that practical philosophy is not limited to ordering, but is truly knowledge. But it does not suffice to regulate action. It knows what ought to be done "at a distance", that is, it adapts for practical use an equipment that is still, in fact, typically speculative. Theology, as Saint Thomas treated it, is both speculative and practical: it is speculatively practical. But true practical knowledge immediately regulates action, judging what is to be done *hic et nunc*. Such is prudence. As a Thomist, Maritain admits also an intermediate zone of knowledge, proceeding quite differently from ethics or theology, but yet, unlike prudence, being truly a science. This he calls practically practical knowledge. Like prudence it proceeds *modo compositivo*; for it gathers together all that is already known in order to organize it all from new points of view corresponding to the exigencies of the concrete act and furnished directly by experience. Mystical contemplation may be considered by the theologian from the speculatively practical point of view; but in itself it is a practically practical knowledge, although grounded upon speculatively practical knowledge. By this Maritain means that a practician of contemplation, such as Saint John of the Cross, is necessarily also theologically sound, but *qua* mystic, he has a distinct mode of (incommunicable) knowledge inaccessible to the theologian, *qua* theologian.<sup>1</sup>

In an appendix,<sup>2</sup> Maritain explains that to the extent that there is "science", knowledge remains speculative. He refers us to his *Art et scolastique*, where he asserts that the truth of the speculative intellect consists in knowing what is, and that of the practical intellect in directing, according to what ought to be.<sup>3</sup> In the order of practical knowledge, moral philosophy therefore represents the most "scientific" degree. If, in practical philosophy, truth does not consist, as it does in speculative philosophy, purely and simply in

<sup>1</sup> Of theology Thomas Aquinas writes: "Magis tamen est speculativa quam practica: quia principalius agit de rebus divinis quam de actibus humanis: de quibus agit, secundum quod per eos ordinatur homo ad perfectam Dei cognitionem, in qua aeterna beatitudo consistit" (*S. Th.* I, I, 4).

<sup>2</sup> *Les Degrés du savoir*, Annexe 7 ("*Speculatif*" et "*Pratique*"), p. 879 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Art et scolastique*, c. 4, s. 3, and n. 14.

*cognoscere*, it consists at least in *cognoscere* as ground of *dirigere*; <sup>1</sup> but in practical knowledge it already consists in *dirigere*, grounded in *cognoscere*; and in prudence it consists, formally, only in *dirigere* itself.

Saint John of the Cross, like Saint Thomas, regards the achievement of the Beatific Vision as the final goal of human life. The Beatific Vision will be the supreme effect of love, although it is by intellection that we shall be "deified". Although on earth we cannot know God immediately, we can so love him.<sup>2</sup> Saint John of the Cross regards as absurd any idea of "pure" knowledge or "pure" intelligence being the proportionate means of union with God; but he calls contemplation itself a form of knowledge by love — a loving attention to God (*advertencia amorosa a Dios, sin especificar actos*).<sup>3</sup> This, which is very different from Neoplatonic intellectualism, is good Thomism.

In an excursus on "practicality", Maritain observes that practically practical sciences use concepts differently from speculative and speculatively practical sciences. In speculative sciences, concepts have their bare value of abstraction, while in practical sciences they are occupied in composing the means, the dynamic moments, by which action should come into existence. Concepts therefore relate to the real in a very different way in the two cases. It is because of this that hyperbole has a specific function in mystical literature. The mystic may say many things that are true from the point of view of his practical science, but untrue from the theological point of view. He may, and often does, say, for instance, that we are mere worms. On the other hand, he may speak as if, in mystical union, we became completely identified with God. In both cases he would be profoundly wrong from the point of view of the theology on which his richest experiences are based, if he purported to state theological propositions. But he is not stating propositions. He is inducing an experience. If, however, he achieves his purpose in a mind unprepared by the necessary theological background,

<sup>1</sup> Cajetan, in 1-2, 57, 5 ad 3 (cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theol.* T. 6, 62, 16, 4): "Veritas intellectus speculativi consistit in cognoscere, veritas autem intellectus practici in dirigere".

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *S. Th.* 1-2, 27, 2; 2-2, 27, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Llama de amor viva*, str. 3; cf. *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, 2, 13.

as may often happen, he is misunderstood in the most disastrous fashion. Only a good Catholic may read a Catholic mystic without danger. For the mystic is doing what an artist might do who painted the Parthenon bright purple and pink, not because that had been his intuition of it at Athens, but in order to coerce certain persons unfamiliar with the effects of the sun in that latitude out of a persistent assumption that the Parthenon is grey or brown.

Saint John of the Cross calls contemplation an absence of all action.<sup>1</sup> Saint Thomas calls it the highest activity.<sup>2</sup> This is due to no difference of meaning or doctrine, but to the fact that the two doctors are using the language of two different kinds of knowledge. From the theological standpoint, there can be no activity higher than that of a vital adherence to God under the influence of operating grace ; but the mystic is so conscious of the suspension of all other activity, when he engages in mystical experience, that to describe the process as one of activity would seem to him to be a negation of its first condition. Of course, the attainment of passivity is itself activity. When a wheel spins a little, it seems to spin very fast ; but after it has attained a high speed it appears motionless. And, if one is borne up on an eagle's wing, it is hardly accurate to describe one's flight as a mere nestling down. The mystics speak of their experience as acquiescence, because they know that to be its *sine qua non*. So it is that the most orthodox of Catholic mystical literature, read otherwise than from the "practical" point of view, would be often indistinguishable from that of Quietism. Saint John of the Cross teaches that, because all human means are inadequate to the full possession of God, the creature must empty itself of all operations. This would be absurd if it were not known (known, that is to say, in faith) that God is there to fill it. Grace is not added to nature as a pediment is added to pillars, but is engrafted into it ; and this nature, though not destroyed, must be radically dispossessed of its affections in order to receive the roots of grace — a process that is not comfortable.

So also when Saint John of the Cross speaks of the soul tasting

<sup>1</sup> *Llama de amor viva*, str. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *S. Th.* 2-2, 179 f.

the savour of eternal life in its very substance,<sup>1</sup> he does not mean this in a philosophical sense. He means that the Holy Spirit enters that "region" of the soul which is inaccessible to the senses<sup>2</sup> — its fine point, as the mystics call it. The soul is affected radically and throughout; but no particular action is apparent, because the activity takes place entirely "inside" the soul.

Like the Franciscan authors whose writings nourished the Carmelites of the Reform, Saint John of the Cross uses the convenient Augustinian division of the higher faculties of the mind into understanding, memory, and will.<sup>3</sup> This is theologically and psychologically untenable. But, Maritain maintains, it is nevertheless useful for the purpose of a practician of contemplation, who must distinguish the potencies not by their ontological articulations, but according to the principal concrete modes of the activity of the subject, in view of its ends.

Mystical knowledge of God is produced, then, by a love that takes its beginning from faith. In one act God communicates light and love together. Contemplation, we are assured by Saint John of the Cross, is "secret" wisdom in that the natural operations of the intellect have no share in it.<sup>4</sup> Saint John of the Cross is a good study, because he conspicuously maintains mystical contemplation free from all desire for human exercise of the intellect. If you wish to know, he would say, turn to theology. If you wish union with God, you must renounce knowledge, in love. We have yet to see precisely what this means.

Jacques Maritain always studies to show Saint John of the Cross as fully consistent with Saint Thomas Aquinas. In a last footnote to the chapter we are considering here, he reasserts the fundamental accord of the two doctors; but he contrasts the scholastic method

<sup>1</sup> *Llama de amor viva*, str. 2. He seems to mean simply what is radical, profound, hidden.

<sup>2</sup> In the terminology of Saint John of the Cross, the "soul" is simply the vital principle of a living being. Horses and rhubarb have souls. Man is distinguished by having a rational soul, and, strictly, this soul has no "regions". It works, however, on different levels of operation; and it is thus that the saint can speak of a "region" of it accessible, or inaccessible, to the senses.

<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that he places the passions under the will. Cf. Aquinas (*S. Th.*, 1-2, 22, 3) who puts them under the sensible appetite.

<sup>4</sup> *Noche oscura*, 2, 18. Cf. Dom Chapman's view, *infra*, § 55, p. 150.

of Aquinas with the "practical, concrete, lyrical thought" of Saint John of the Cross, with its "harvest of intuitions".

### § 55. *A Critical Review of Maritain; and our Hypothesis*

As soon as Maritain rises from analogical knowledge to mystical experience, he introduces the familiar scholastic conception of connaturality. In this, and in his account of what we may now call without misunderstanding the activity and passivity of contemplation, he has both clearly understood the mystics and shown himself a redoubtable champion of the best scholastic tradition. But he does not, it seems, adequately account for the alleged fact that by connaturality we *know* God, and this in a clearer way than by analogy, even the "super-analogy" of faith. Why should we know God, in what is claimed to be a much more intimate fashion, by the fact of being made by sanctifying grace and mystical contemplation in some way connatural with him? We have readily conceded that human love is the best analogy in ordinary experience to describe the mystical relationship. This is what the mystics repeatedly say; and we are prepared to accept their evidence. Saint Thomas also informs us that love is more unitive than knowledge.<sup>1</sup> But this does not help us to interpret the mystics' claim, the basis of which is of paramount interest to us. Maritain's analysis seems here to fail us; for "knowing in love" does not explain to us in any way the kind of knowledge that this love bestows or makes possible. Ordinarily, one cannot love an object one does not know.<sup>2</sup> But in this case the knowledge appears to be given with the love. Nevertheless, although in the highest degree of mystical union one fully responds to the love received from God, to the extent that union with an earthly body permits a state of actuation from a *habitus* of charity, we cannot either here or even in the Beatific Vision know God to the extent to which he knows us; for he knows us to the extent to which we are knowable; and we cannot ever

<sup>1</sup> *S. Th.* 1-2, 28, 1 ad 3: "Amor est magis univivus quam cognitio".

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 1-2, 28, 1: "Cum autem sit duplex amor, scilicet concupiscentiae et amicitiae, uterque procedit ex quadam apprehensione unitatis amati ad amantem: cum enim aliquis amat aliquid, quasi concupiscens illud, apprehendit illud quasi pertinens ad suum bene esse".

know God in this way. How then do we know him directly, in a manner exceeding knowledge by faith? Evidently we know him without the use of *phantasmata*, when we "know him in love". Indeed, Dom Chapman assures us that we know him without any imaginative or emotional activity at all. "The images and emotions cease to be 'me'; they are 'peripheral' (I hate jargon), and they are like my clothes, not like my heart."<sup>1</sup> We do not regard this language as precise; but at least it leaves us in no doubt that a mode of "knowledge" of a non-sensory kind is claimed. And yet, according to Dom Chapman, the intellect used in mystical contemplation is the same intellect that we use in reflection or meditation. "What Père Poulain calls the 'ligature' (he explains it wrongly) is simply the fact that one can't (easily) put one's mind to two things at once. When the intellect is occupied with God, it can't think out a subject and meditate."<sup>2</sup>

Our hypothesis, which we intend to verify in the next chapter, is that in mystical experience we must distinguish between that non-sensory experience peculiar to it and the knowledge that is its ground. The mystic does not "know in love", which for us is not a meaningful phrase: he simply loves. He loves God, being loved by God; and by an empathetic activity of the will he truly delights in God. He cannot do this without knowing God, and, although there be many *degrés du savoir*, there is only one way of knowing, namely, that which has aesthesis as its ground. It is this activity of love which is peculiarly incommunicable, and which the mystic is necessarily at a loss to describe. He may say that it is like the experience of a child putting his head between his father's hands; but he knows that such a description of the experience says no more about it than the description of God as "like a father" says about God. Even an experience of human love is quite unique. We saw in the earlier part of our inquiry that my friendship with A is quite different from my friendship with B, and that there is no simple way, if there is any way at all, in which I can communicate what I mean by either experience.<sup>3</sup> I cannot, moreover, describe

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman, O.S.B.* (2nd ed. 1938), p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, § 37, p. 93; cf. § 43, p. 116 f.



to A precisely what is my experience with B, nor to B precisely what is my experience with A. The experience of Abélard and Héloïse is not simply an instance of a universal human experience, but a specific experience not communicable in the way in which aesthetic or moral activity is communicable. But the ground of the experience is communicable. We can never have precisely the experience of Abélard and Héloïse simply because we are not either Abélard or Héloïse ; but it is at least conceivable that, if we are made aware of its ground, we may recognize an experience of ours as in some way parallel to it.

It is not for nothing that Maritain engages in so complicated a discussion on the scholastic distinction between speculative and practical knowledge. He perceives, and we regard this as crucial, that a John of the Cross is a kind of artist, whose "thought" is essentially "practical, lyrical, concrete". But Maritain, as a Thomist, regards art as a practical activity. Ordinarily, it is speculatively practical ;<sup>1</sup> but the art of which a John of the Cross is a practitioner is practically practical. This is to say, it is not merely an activity by which aesthetic intuition is communicated, but one by which a "state" or "experience", the nature of which is otherwise incommunicable, may be induced.<sup>2</sup> All that any mystic can do here is to try to bring about in the mind of his hearer, by an enrichment of his experience, that aesthetic ground in which, philosophically, we may be said to know God. He cannot make us love God ; and so he cannot communicate to us the experience that mystics call "knowing in love". But by his "art" (mystical writings) he may put us in the way of having not only the necessary aesthetic ground, but the activity of the will in love that may enable us to have the mystical experience ourselves. We have seen that, when Croce does use the term "art" otherwise than in his special sense to denote the aesthetic fact, he must regard it as a practical activity of communication, connected with, but quite different from, aesthesis. But this "art" of the mystical writer,

<sup>1</sup> *S. Th.* 1-2, 57, 4 ad 2: "Ars magis convenit cum habitibus speculativis in ratione virtutis quam cum prudentia". *Supra*, Introduction, p. xiv, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Always, of course, under God: in Catholic mysticism there can be no question of "controlling" God.

on the other hand, is not only a practical activity for communicating aesthetic fact, although it is this also : it is a practical activity or technique to stimulate in us a special act of the will, by which we put ourselves in the mystical relation. No true mystic is so ingenuous as to suppose this to be other than an extremely complex technique ; for the process by which one arrives at the mystical relation is an extremely complex process. Communicated to us must be the immense aesthetic ground of the mystical experience. This presupposes an intricate process of recasting all our knowledge of God ("rational" and "by faith") in the crucible whence aesthetic intuitions are withdrawn. But, because in the mystical experience this ground of aesthesis and the activity of the will in love are inextricably bound together, the mystic must always recast the whole of his own experience in trying to communicate part of it ; and he is acutely aware that, however successfully he tries to pass on the ground of his experience, that which he is passing on is not the experience at all. He must continually insist that we must ourselves love God in order to have the mystical experience ; but one cannot be ordered at the bayonet's point to fall in love. The mystic must therefore coax us by means of a most delicate technique to fall in love with God, and thus be led to the mystical experience. He tends, therefore, to pass on a small part of the aesthetic ground of the experience in such a way as will incline the hearer to develop it into the empathetic activity of mystical union. He does not give a straightforward account of aesthetic fact. Once a hearer's attention is so focussed upon God in love, on the basis of his own aesthetic foundation, he is at least in the way of attaining the complete aesthetic ground necessary for having the experience of mystical union. He is also at least more likely to develop it in fact into that union, by becoming truly active in empathetic delight in the mind of God. The mystical writer must also contend with numerous delusions on the part of an aspirant who, either through failing to achieve the necessary aesthetic ground, or through deliberately avoiding the direction of his mind to God in the logically super-vening act of will, may fancy that he is enjoying the mystical experience when in fact he is merely enjoying himself.

In thus readily accepting Maritain's interpretation of mystical literature, we do not mean, as he does not mean, that the mystics are not to be taken seriously, any more than we mean that a poet is not to be taken seriously merely because we have discovered that what he is writing is not prose. The poet, as engaged in aesthetic intuition (*i.e.* in "art", in the Crocean sense of "aesthetic fact"), is engaged in the same activity as are we when we read him appreciatively. But the poet as a practical technician, engaged in communicating the aesthetic fact, is not to be misunderstood as if, for example, he were communicating a series of logical propositions.<sup>1</sup> We take Sacheverell Sitwell quite seriously when he tells us that Agamemnon's bones, "picked clean, were any other bones";<sup>2</sup> but we do not take him seriously as a physicist. The technique of mystical literature is to be taken seriously for what it is, namely, a means of inducing in us the state of having empathetic activity in the divine being, who is wholly other than ourselves and upon whom we wholly depend.<sup>3</sup>

We shall see in the next chapter that the mystic must engage in mental activity upon a vast scale. Reflective activity is being constantly turned back into the crucible; but so also are all acts of will. In this process, aesthesis has the fundamental place. Floods of imagery pour into the mystic's mind. He intuits a limitless range of particulars — rivers, swans, towers, diamonds, cathedrals, rocks, chants, perfumes — and proceeds, from such aesthetic knowledge, to a specific activity of the will in love with God, until at length he attains mystical union, in which his mind, grounded in a vast aesthetic intuition, truly delights in God by *Einfühlung*. In the mystical experience, therefore, the balance between knowledge and will is most delicately poised — otherwise mystic love would be impossible — and the knowledge is, as always, fundamentally aesthetic.

We shall now investigate whether the mystics bear out this view.

<sup>1</sup> As Joseph de Maistre wrote, "La raison ne peut que parler, c'est l'amour qui chante".

<sup>2</sup> *Agamemnon's Tomb*.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, § 59, p. 178.

## CHAPTER SIX

### AN EXAMINATION OF CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

#### § 56. *The Philosophical Grounds of Catholic Mysticism*

WE may now make a decisive step. In order to interpret the Catholic mystics, we must know certain facts about the philosophical grounds of the experience they claim. The Latin Church has generally recognized mystical theology as a branch of sacred learning. But it was through a treatise entitled *Theologia Mystica*, by the Pseudo-Dionysius, that the term made its incursion into Christendom. The great early doctors of the west, Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard, preferred to speak of contemplation. It is this latter term, in fact, that still broadly distinguishes the ancient orders of the Latin Church from her more modern religious congregations. It was later, and perhaps somewhat reluctantly, that the Middle Ages acquiesced in the use of the term "mystical", while it is only in comparatively recent times that we hear of "mysticism" as a fruit to be expected in Western Christendom. From our modern standpoint we may indeed find mysticism in abundance in the New Testament documents and early liturgical fragments ; and we may recognize the early Christian approach as thoroughly mystical in character ; but the classic tradition may be said to begin in a conscious technique of contemplation, whose first great exponent is Saint Augustine.

We must distinguish between this classic tradition, austere, calm, and restrained, and all later traditions. It is this early, classic tradition that, as we have already mentioned, Dom Cuthbert Butler has aptly called "Western Mysticism", as distinguished from "mysticism in the west".<sup>1</sup> We promised to give it some special consideration, because later traditions never wholly broke loose from it, however brilliant the colour or dark the clouds of the atmosphere in which they appeared and flourished. Whatever we

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 47, p. 128.

can say of this classic tradition must therefore in some measure be true of all later traditions, subject only to modifications. We will therefore examine the mould of "Western Mysticism" in its first great exponent, and then consider to what extent we must modify our statements in order to apply them fairly to the later traditions. This is a safer course than looking at once to later mystics whose language will often yield more facile support to our views.

#### (A) THE GROUNDS OF AUGUSTINIAN MYSTICISM

We know how much Saint Austin was influenced by Neoplatonism. And we know from the Neoplatonists what the Neoplatonic *ascensus animae* was like. The mystical ascent was seen in terms of philosophical contemplation. "Philosophical contemplation" is not mere "philosophizing about". It is one thing to examine discursively, by our reason, and attempt analytic definitions: it is another thing, when we have carefully isolated a metaphysical object, to enjoy, possess, or contemplate our object. What are we to make of such "contemplation"? Is it what we should call aesthesis of the conceptually clarified object, recast in the crucible of intuition? If the object is a metaphysical one, we may affirm that this is so only analogically. In such a case the aesthesis can never be properly aesthesis of the conceptually clarified object. I cannot so properly intuit, by aesthetic activity, even the human soul. But (a) I may have aesthetic intuition of a *symbol* of the soul, which in discursive consideration I merely stated, and (b) I may, by the aid of the intuited symbol, appreciate the existence of my soul, an appreciation which, though not an aesthetic intuition, may fairly be called analogous to one. We may distinguish the following main steps in the mystical journey: <sup>1</sup>

(a) The mystic begins by turning away from the many *pulchra* of the sensory world, and turning in upon his own soul. In this introspective process, he does truly reject sensory images, as he says. He looks at a number of aestheses in order to become aware

<sup>1</sup> We do not profess, of course, to find this scheme set forth in Saint Augustine. On the contrary, he tends to concentrate on (a) and (b) and to neglect (c) and (d). Our account is rather what a later mystic would see as the complete *via Augustiniana*.

of the intensity of the mental acts in which he concerns himself with them ; for in order to reject images there must be images to be rejected. He then turns his attention away from *aestheta* to the mind that lives in expressing them. But he catches the mind in its vivid act *because* he has looked at *aestheta*. We might call this self-awareness " aut-empathy ", for it is like the cognitive aspect, at least, of true empathy in another's mind. That is to say, it is self-miming. In empathy I have to mime my friend's mental acts, as far as I can, although our view is that empathy consists more essentially in the pleasure in or will for contact with the other mind than in such miming, which is, nevertheless, an indispensable factor in the empathetic process. In self-awareness my second act mimes my previous act : it seems that it is only thus that I can be said to apprehend my own act. There can hardly be said to be the same pleasure in or will for contact with my own mind that there is in true empathy, although perhaps there might be something of the kind even here — a narcissistic pleasure as it would be. At any rate, in the interests of brevity, we shall call it " aut-empathy " in order to mark its relation to empathetic activity, without allowing ourselves to take such an artificial term too seriously. Here my second act " lives in " my former act, which it appreciates, when I re-enact my own activity, becoming aware of it.

Nevertheless, to the extent that we consider the soul as a sort of *being*, this " aut-empathy " is probably accompanied by analogical pictures which *are* truly aesthetic. I may say that I become aware, by self-miming, of my own activity in aesthetically apprehending, for example, a difficult and complex aesthetic situation, and I call this process " aut-empathetic ". But how do I — how *can* I — so become aware of my soul's activity ? I consider my soul as, for example, a moving light, illuminating one *aestheton* after another, although I know, of course, that my soul is no such light, and that I am merely using such an analogical picture to help me to have awareness of myself in my own activity. Such analogical pictures do seem to be used in fact by the mystics themselves in this " aut-empathetic " act preparatory to the " contemplation " of God.

(b) All this is, however, *only* a preparatory process. The mystic now contemplates God as the Light of the mind, as the changeless

Beauty which irradiates us with the "light" by which we "light up" the beauties of sense. It is possible that there is latent in Augustinian mysticism some false, Neoplatonic, epistemological theory. The saint may have done violence to his real experience by neoplatonizing it to the extent that sometimes he has done. Even so, it is clear at least that the Being of God is apprehended not without figures — partly misleading — of light, or fire, or perfume. But this classic mystical tradition is, on the other hand, deeply rooted in the imagery of the sacred Scriptures, and particularly in the Psalms, the life-blood of the Benedictine office. From this source Augustine readily takes his images. The point is that in contemplation it is not enough to have the analogical propositions that suffice for theological statement: we must have analogical intuitions/expressions, symbolizing God's activity in the soul.

(c) It is about (a) and (b) that Saint Austin so abundantly informs us. And yet, so far, nothing distinctively mystical can be said to have taken place. The saint only hints about the succeeding and more distinctively mystical steps. It is because of this, no doubt, that the extent to which Augustine may be called strictly a mystic is open to question. However that may be, the next step is to be found very plainly in that other Neoplatonist, the Pseudo-Denys, author of the first treatise on mystical theology, to which we have referred in opening the present chapter.<sup>1</sup> It is at this third step that we truly reject our images of God. This rejection must be distinguished from the rejection of images to which we referred under (a). There we turned from acknowledged *aestheta* (pictures, trees, honey, water brooks) inwards to the soul. But now we do reject these subtle analogical images by which we symbolize God as, for example, the soul of our souls, the intellectual light of our intellectual light. It is now that we say, "Thou, O God, art above all: I am content not to know what like thou art". Here we somehow soar beyond the sensory, and beyond the aesthetic intuition/expression. But it is obvious that the significance of this renunciation of images is still entirely dependent on the *aestheta* which it rejects. The mystic's "not" ("thou, O God, art *not* this; thou, O God, art *not* that") is not a mere denial. It is not as

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 154.

if we should say, "an elephant is not one of the moral virtues" or "an act of faith is not a hippopotamus". On the contrary, it really means: "thou, O God, art *beyond* the apprehension I have formed". Simply to say "God is above all", as if *in vacuo*, without first striving to conceive in some way his pre-eminence, so far from leading to mystical experience, leads nowhere, for it is meaningless. The ground of aesthesis, therefore, is not even here taken away.

(d) The effect of making this renunciation of images which necessarily externalize God is, however, to liberate us for awareness of him in the soul. Concerning this stage we must depend on the mystic's efforts to communicate to us what happens, for, unlike him, we cannot claim this awareness in the highest mystical sense of the term. Nevertheless, by an act of faith, we may, as it were, locate God there, believing that God, seen in such intellectual purity, is the very spring of light and charity in our soul, that he is in point of fact warming and renewing it. This act of faith tends, but only tends, to become something more. The mystic, however, *has* something more: *patitur divina*. He does not present to himself such images, not even the notion of God conceived as the negation of such images, merely for the purpose of believing them. He enjoys an experience that we do not enjoy, and one which is certainly something far beyond philosophical contemplation. We interpret it as an experience of emphatic union with and in God.

#### (B) THE GROUNDS OF THE LATER TRADITIONS

As we have said, no later traditions of Catholic mysticism can be considered quite apart from this classic tradition. But nearly all post-Bernardine mysticism, for Saint Bernard, as we shall see, marks the breaking of new ground, is less severely philosophical than that which the Plotinian path prescribed to Saint Austin. There is a tendency in the later traditions to start at (b) rather than (a). And there is not necessarily the same priority accorded to the strictly metaphysical images of God, as, for example, the "Light of Understanding". Augustine used, as did Gregory a few centuries later, a rich psalm-imagery; but in Bernard much more free use is made of such imagery to colour abstractions of



God ; and later mysticism is in this respect free from almost all restraint. The Augustinian moorings still hold firmly, but their Platonic texture has gradually changed. When later mystical literature describes the ascent of the soul, it tends to concentrate wholly on the vital points, namely, the rejection of the images of God (c), and the agony of waiting for the *passio divinorum* (d).

### § 57. “*Western Mysticism*”

Let us now consider how the mystics do, in fact, speak. As we cannot hope to deal exhaustively with so vast a literature as that of Christian mysticism, and as much of this literature is very easily accessible, it will serve our purpose well enough to look at a few important traditions. Which traditions are the most important is disputable, and the dispute might be a serious one for a history of mysticism ; but for our purpose it is of no crucial importance what choice we make, provided that we look first to the classic tradition to which we have referred for the secure groundwork of all later traditions. Our aim will be to interpret what the mystics say. To some extent we shall be able to do this as we proceed ; but we shall have to gather up our argument as we reach the concluding sections of this chapter.

In the God-addressed *Confessions*, Saint Augustine tells the story of a quest for love. Even as an infant at his mother's breast, he received also heavenly nourishment, he believes, tasting God's riches, which reach *ad fundum rerum*.<sup>1</sup> Later, while searching unwittingly for God, he searched deep into the corporeal. Even on the eve of his conversion, such a preoccupation overshadowed his discernment of the spiritual.<sup>2</sup> His heart cried out violently against all mental images (*clamabat violenter cor meum adversus omnia phantasmata mea*) ; and as he strove to beat off this fluttering crowd (*abigere circumvolantem turbam*) from his mind's eye, they were gone for but an instant when again they poured in upon him relentlessly, until he began to conceive of God as a huge corporeal

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, 1, 6, 7 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 32, col. 664).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 4, 15, 24-27 (*loc. cit.* col. 703 f.)

substance piercing the whole world.<sup>1</sup> Then, however, entering, under God's guidance, into his inmost self, he discovered with his mind's eye the unchangeable light (*intravi et vidi . . . supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem*).<sup>2</sup> At last his mind reached *id quod est*.<sup>3</sup>

Reflecting upon the knowledge of God that he thus acquired, Saint Austin makes it clear beyond doubt that what he loves when he loves God is certainly not aesthetic experience. It is "not the pleasant melodies of songs, nor the fragrant smell of ointment and flowers and spices". And yet, when he loves God, he does love a certain kind of light, a kind of voice, a kind of fragrance. But this "light" is not locally restricted, nor does time silence the "voice", nor wind scatter the "fragrance".<sup>4</sup> He asks the earth what it is he so loves. Earth answers, *non sum*. So also answer the very heavens. But when he presses for a better answer they say, *ipse fecit nos*.<sup>5</sup>

The saint observes that he cannot know God by what he calls the faculty that gives life to his body — otherwise the horse and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 7, 1, 1-2 (*loc. cit.* col. 733).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 7, 10, 16 (*loc. cit.* col. 742).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 7, 17, 23 (*loc. cit.* col. 744 f.). This passage is of such importance that we reproduce much of it here: "Et mirabar, quod jam te amabam, non pro te phantasma: et non stabam frui deo meo, sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo, moxque diripiebar abs te pondere meo, et ruebam in ista cum gemitu. . . . Quaerens enim, unde adprobarem pulchritudinem corporum sive caelestium sive terrestrium, et quid mihi praesto esset integre de mutabilibus, judicanti et dicenti, 'hoc ita esse debet, illud non ita': hoc ergo quaerens, unde judicarem, cum ita judicarem, inveneram incommutabilem et veram veritatis aeternitatem supra mentem meam commutabilem. Atque ita gradatim a corporibus ad sentientem per corpus animam, atque inde ad ejus interiorum vim, cui sensus corporis exteriora nuntiaret, et quousque possunt bestiae, atque inde rursus ad ratiocinantem potentiam, ad quam refertur judicandum, quod sumitur a sensibus corporis. Quae se quoque in me comperiens mutabilem, erexit se ad intelligentiam suam, et abduxit cogitationem a consuetudine, subtrahens se contradicentibus turbis phantasmatum, ut inveniret, quo lumine aspergeretur; cum sine ulla dubitatione clamaret incommutabile praeferendum esse mutabili, unde nosset ipsum incommutabile — quod nisi aliquo modo nosset, nullo modo illud mutabili certa praeponeret — et pervenit ad id quod est, in ictu trepidantis aspectus."

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 6, 8 (*loc. cit.* col. 782 f.).

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 6, 9 (*loc. cit.* col. 783): "interrogatio mea, intentio mea; et responso eorum, species eorum".

the mule might know God. Another faculty, which gives not only life, but sense to his flesh (*non solum qua vivifico sed etiam qua sensifico carnem meam*),<sup>1</sup> is likewise not enough for a knowledge of God, but is, however, a step nearer what is required. Soaring beyond it, he comes into what he calls the fields and spacious palaces of his memory, where the treasures of innumerable images that have been perceived by the senses have been stored (*ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cujuscemodi rebus sensis invectorum*).<sup>2</sup> From this treasury he can bring forth what he will; but while some treasures are readily accessible, and some even rush out in crowds, others have to be inquired after, and taken out of secret drawers. He can dwell in this treasure-house when all its doors are barred to the external world, although everything that is in it once came from outside. Here he can discern the breath of lilies from that of violets, although he smells neither. In this huge court (*in aula ingenti*),<sup>3</sup> in these innumerable fields and dens and caves (*in memoriae meae campis et antris et cavernis innumerabilibus*),<sup>4</sup> he can sort out and rearrange these images.

But in such introspection he gets beyond images, and "sees" that "other light", which is unchangeable (*incommutabilis*).<sup>5</sup> Such "perception" is not *corporalis*, as that by which physical objects are perceived, nor *spiritualis*, as that by which physical objects present to the mind only in memory or imagination are perceived, but *intellectualis*; <sup>6</sup> and *intellectualis visio non fallitur*.<sup>7</sup> This intellectual "perception" is attained in a special manner, namely, *quodam contactu ad illam incommutabilem lucem*.<sup>8</sup> It is a fleeting contact, as if one were suddenly lifted up into God's arms and put down again as

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 7, 11 (*loc. cit.* col. 784).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 8, 12 (*loc. cit.* col. 784).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 8, 14 (*loc. cit.* col. 785).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 10, 17, 26 (*loc. cit.* col. 790).

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 7, 10, 16 (*loc. cit.* col. 742): "Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae, supra eundem oculum animae meae supra mentem meam, lucem incommutabilem".

<sup>6</sup> *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 12, 6, 15; 12, 11, 22 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 34, cols. 458-459, 462-463).

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* 12, 14, 29 (*loc. cit.* col. 465). Cf. 12, 25, 52 (col. 476): "In visione autem spirituali, id est in corporum similitudinibus, quae spiritu videntur, fallitur anima, cum ea quae sic videt, ipsa corpora esse arbitratur".

<sup>8</sup> *Serm.* 52, 6, 16 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 38, col. 360).

swiftly as one had been lifted up (*rapida cogitatione attingimus*). In this swift *momentum intelligentiae*, *attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis*.<sup>1</sup> In this embrace we grasp *per speciem*.<sup>2</sup>

Dom Cuthbert Butler, in a section on the phenomena of ecstasy, with its alienation of the senses, in Augustinian mysticism, refers to a passage in which the saint seeks to determine the object perceived in ecstasy of the highest and most purely intellectual kind, and regards this passage as one of the most difficult that confronts us in this field.<sup>3</sup> Saint Augustine here makes an important distinction. Among the intellectual objects of vision, some are "seen" in the soul itself, such as moral virtues. These are truly "seen" intellectually. Distinct from them is the "Light" whereby the soul that is so enlightened is enabled to "see", for example, such moral virtues. That "Light" is God himself, whom the soul is not able to "see" in this way, although it is only *by* that "Light" that the soul can in any wise "see" these moral virtues. Nevertheless, in ecstasy, when it is withdrawn from the bodily senses, and "more expressly presented to that vision",<sup>4</sup> it "sees", "in some way of its own", even that "Light", by whose aid only it can "see" whatever else it intellectually "sees". Dom Butler's conclusion on this question is that, while there is no evidence that Saint Austin believed that he had enjoyed a momentary experience of the Beatific Vision, he indubitably believed that he had nevertheless "seen" the Brightness of the Lord, as did Moses and Paul, *per speciem* and not *in aenigmate*. At any rate, the important point is that it seems indubitable that Augustine believed that the kind of experience enjoyed by Moses and Paul is (a) truly at least an intellectual "vision" of God, whether or not it may strictly be called a momentary "taste" of the Beatific Vision, and (b) practically attainable, in the highest contemplation, by other persons,

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.* 9, 10, 24-25 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 32, cols. 774-775).

<sup>2</sup> *Fides* and *species* are opposed as in Paul, 2 Cor. v, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Western Mysticism* (ed. cit.), p. 77 f.

<sup>4</sup> Dom Cuthbert Butler quotes from *De Genesi ad Litteram* (12, 31, 59; ed. Zycha, Corpus Viennense). He translates the phrase *illi expressius visioni prae-sentatur* literally, doubting its meaning, but refers to the rendering by Pusey (who cites the passage in illustration of *Conf.* 7, 17, 23, which we have quoted, *supra*, p. 160, n. 3): "the soul is placed more expressly in the presence of that vision", i.e. the divine "Light".

although not necessarily attained in all intellectual "vision", for, just as one may see physical objects by the light of the sun without seeing the sun, so one may, without in fact "seeing" the "Light", "see" intellectually *by* the "Light". And not less significant is the rapturous joy which accompanies this direct "vision" of God in the highest contemplation, and which Saint Austin, like every other mystic, fully attests. Whatever this experience may be, it is evidently one to which the highest and purest human love is the nearest analogy. But with it, or in reflection upon it, is an awareness that the metaphysical object now so loved, that is, God, has been present all the time, although hitherto unrecognized, and, it may be, unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Saint Gregory (540-604), who follows closely the Augustinian tradition in contemplation, gives an interesting account of the earlier steps, in which images are rejected. On the basis of an allegorical interpretation of the doors and windows of Ezekiel's Temple,<sup>2</sup> he describes the preliminary condition as the exclusion from the mind of all *phantasmata*. Thus emptied, the mind seeks itself interiorly. It gathers itself to itself (*se ad se colligit*) in recollection ;<sup>3</sup> then "sees" itself by introversion in this recollected state ; and finally makes of itself a ladder for itself (*sibi de seipsa gradus ascensionis facit*), and, rising above itself in contemplation, yields by an act of the will to the impact of God.<sup>4</sup> In this state the mind is like a room through which a chink of light is penetrating the empty darkness. Only a glimpse of light is given ; but within the confines

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.* 10, 27, 38 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 32, col. 795) : "Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi ! Et ecce intus eras et ego foris, et ibi te quarebam, et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, deformis inruebam. Mecum eras, et tecum non eram".

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel, xl. 6-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Hom. in Ezech.* 2, 5, 9 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 76, cols. 989-990) : There are three grades of contemplation. "Primus ergo gradus est ut se ad se colligat, secundus ut videat qualis est collecta, tertia ut super semetipsam surgat, ac se contemplationi [*or, in contemplatione*] auctoris invisibilis intendendo subiciat." But, "se ad se nullatenus colligit, nisi prius didicerit terrenarum atque caelestium imaginum phantasmata ab oculis mentis compescere, quidquid de visu, quidquid de auditu, quidquid de odoratu, quidquid de tactu et gustu corporeo cogitationi ejus occurrerit, respuere atque calcare, quatenus talem se quaerat intus, qualis sine istis est".

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 2, 5, 8 (*loc. cit.* col. 989).

of an emptied mind it is so great we can scarcely hold it.<sup>1</sup>

Except in some emphases, there is little difference between Gregory's approach and that of Augustine. It is to be expected, of course, that Gregory's typically Roman mind should modify, as it does, the Neoplatonic groundwork of his precursor. He is very cautious as to the extent to which finite mind can ever, even in the beatified state, enjoy God's essence. But that there is truly mutual love in contemplation he does not doubt. The swiftness of the contemplative experience he stresses much, repeatedly using the words *rapit* and *raptim*. When the mind has shut out external things, it finds itself in such a condition that it is able, in certain circumstances, to be "stretched wholly to the love of God".

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), the lineal descendant of Saint Augustine in mystical tradition, marks the culmination of the tradition and heralds its yielding to one that is less austere. He explicitly excludes all *phantasmata* from the mind aspiring to contemplation, however; and he believes that in introversion we are enabled to "see" the *Imago Dei* in ourselves.<sup>2</sup> The joy of contemplation transports us in two ways, namely, in "light" (*i.e.* knowledge) and in "fervour" (*i.e.* love). Interpreting the text, "we will make thee chains of gold, inlaid with silver",<sup>3</sup> as "nothing other than the weaving of certain spiritual likenesses", so that the mind may perceive divine wisdom in a mirror, because still unable to perceive it face to face, Bernard supposes that good angels waft such images to the mind to prepare it for the leap from the contemplation of God in them to the joy of true mystical union with God.<sup>4</sup> Then the mind falls into a deep sleep, "in the arms

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 2, 5, 17 (*loc. cit.* col. 995): "In fenestris obliquis pars illa per quam lumen intrat angusta est, sed pars interior quae lumen suscipit lata, quia mentes contemplantium quamvis aliquid tenuiter de vero lumine videant, in semetipsis tamen magna amplitudine dilatantur. Quae videlicet et ipsa quae conspiciunt capere pauca vix possunt. Exiguum quippe valde est quod de aeternitate contemplantes vident, sed ex ipso exiguo laxatur sinus mentium in augmentum fervoris et amoris; et inde apud se amplae fiunt, unde ad se veritatis lumen quasi per angustias admittunt." Cf. Teresa, *infra*, p. 176, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Serm. de Div.* 9, 2 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 183, col. 566).

<sup>3</sup> Solomon's Song, i, 11. (i, 10, *Vulg.*)

<sup>4</sup> *Cant.* 41, 3 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 183, cols. 985-986).

of God", a sleep that is, paradoxically, very vigilant.<sup>1</sup>

The conception of Christ as the Bridegroom and of the contemplative as the Bride, familiar in later mystical literature, is first elaborated by Bernard. We are embraced by God. Bernard uses this figure to exhibit the nature of the experience as not homage or wonder but, rather, love. A lord is feared, a father honoured, but a bridegroom is loved; and so the saint prefers this figure. To love God with one's whole being is to be wedded (*nupsisse*) to him.

It is certain that Augustine and Gregory regarded contemplation as open to all Christians, and so probably did Bernard. But probably Gregory and certainly Bernard do not suppose to the same degree as Augustine that one can in this life truly "see" God intellectually; for Bernard holds that God, although he does not manifest himself as something altogether different from that which he is, nevertheless appears as he wishes rather than as he fully is. In one passage, however,<sup>2</sup> even Saint Bernard suggests that Saint Benedict, in his vision, enjoyed, at least *ad modicum*, the contemplation of God face to face, as do the blessed, and "saw the whole world gathered together under one ray of the sun". While, however, some distinctions within the tradition we have been describing are important to the historian of mysticism, they are of little significance to us, who may be content to look at the tradition that reigned throughout the earlier Middle Ages, as one radically indivisible whole.

### § 58. *Mediaeval Mysticism*

The writings of the Pseudo-Denys, although translated by John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, appear to have exercised

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 52, 3 (*loc. cit.* col. 1031): "magis istiusmodi vitalis vigilque sopor sensum interiorellum illuminat". Bernard distinguishes contemplation from "consideration" (*De Consideratione*, 2, 2, 5; Migne, *P.L.* vol. 182, col. 745): "Potest contemplatio quidem definiri, verus certusque intuitus animi de quacunque re, sive apprehensio veri non dubia. Consideratio autem intensa ad investigandum cogitatio, vel intentio animi vestigantis verum." In contemplation, however, we may "intuit" not only God (in some degree) but also the saints and angels in heaven — an activity distinct from that of mystical union with God.

<sup>2</sup> *Serm. de Div.* 9, 1 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 183, cols. 565-566).

little influence until the twelfth, but then his emphasis on the transcendence of God and the *via negativa* began to exercise a considerable influence on much western thought. It is very apparent in the Dominican Eckhart (1260-1329), his pupil Tauler (c. 1300-1361), Suso (c. 1300-1366), and Ruysbroeck (1293-1381). But by this time many influences are at work, so many that in this age that may be called the Golden Age of Catholic Mysticism, for its spirit is imbued with a mystical fervour to a peculiarly wide extent, it would be hard to select any one mystic or set of mystics as its representatives. Even Saint Francis of Assisi cannot be regarded as typical enough. We might turn back to Richard of Saint Victor, whom Dante calls "in contemplation more than man";<sup>1</sup> but as the still overshadowed contemporary of Bernard he would not fill the role. Even Thomas and Bonaventure would have some claims; but they were pre-eminently scholars. Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), than whom no contemporary saw more clearly the essential character of the contemplative state as love, would have a claim.<sup>2</sup> Ruysbroeck would have much interest for us.<sup>3</sup> Or we might turn to Cardinal Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464), who, as he gazed upon an icon of Christ, was able to contemplate the "true face" of God, which is "free from any limitation".<sup>4</sup> But in this age no mystic towers so high above his generation as did a Bernard or a John of the Cross above theirs.

In the father of Italian poetry, on the other hand, we find the true spirit of mediaeval mysticism faithfully reflected and exquisitely

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, 10, 132.

<sup>2</sup> "Amans volat, currit et laetatur: liber est et non tenetur" (*De Imitatione* (Text. Hirsch.), 3, 5, 43-44). "Beati oculi qui exterioribus clausi, interioribus autem sunt intenti" (*op. cit.* 3, 1, 8-10). "Omnis namque amans, suo dilecto . . . preeparat locum" (*op. cit.* 4, 12, 15).

<sup>3</sup> "When God manifests himself to our intellectual eyes with infused light, he gives us the power to know him under similitudes, as in a mirror in which we see forms, images and likenesses of God. But that substance which is himself we cannot see save through himself, for it is above us and above all practice of virtues. And therefore we should be ready to contemplate God and worship him in images, forms and divine likenesses, by which he may transport us and raise us above ourselves into a certain unity with him beyond all similitudes" (*The Seven Steps of the Ladder of Spiritual Love*, tr. from the Flemish by F. S. Taylor (Dacre Press, 1943), 5 D, p. 31).

<sup>4</sup> *De Visione Dei*, 6.



expressed by one who, if not a mystic, was at any rate a mystics' poet as well as a poets' poet. It has been well said that to know the *Commedia* is to know the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> So we turn to Dante.

To him, as to his contemporaries, all things spoke of God, in the sense that there was understood to be in the world a system of hieroglyphics, intelligible to illumined eyes, through which God truly revealed himself. The use of sensuous symbols to communicate this supersensible reality is therefore for him the normal, obvious proceeding.<sup>2</sup> But as the hieroglyphs of God are comprehensible only to those who have the key, Dante regards it as natural that he should pack his epic with an immeasurable wealth of symbolism, so that readers may extract from it just as much as they can and need. Like Saint Thomas, he insists on the Pauline injunction "not to be high-minded above what one ought to be minded."<sup>3</sup>

Dante speaks of an *intelletto d' amore*; but whatever this may mean, the great mystical fact of love grounded in knowledge plays a central part in the *Commedia*. The Sun is the proper symbol for God because it radiates both light and heat, as God gives intellect and will that we may have knowledge and love, that is, that we may know him and love him. From Mary, as a "Sun" proceeds Lucia, the ray of light or knowledge; and from them both proceeds Beatrice, the ray of heat or love. For the highest of all mysteries, the same symbolism holds. From the Father proceeds the Son, as Light of the World; and from Father and Son proceeds the Holy Spirit, as Lord of Life and Love.<sup>4</sup>

Dante sees the mystery of the Incarnation as the supreme executive act of God in time, by which saving grace has been

<sup>1</sup> The *Commedia* enjoyed such prestige in mediaeval Florence that it was for many years read in the Duomo as a quasi-canonical office: see the Abbé Saltet's *Histoire de l'Église*, § 407.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, 4, 40-42:

"Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno;  
Perocchè solo da sensato apprende  
Ciò, che fa poscia d' intelletto degno."

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 12, 3 (*Vulg.*): "non plus sapere quam oportet sapere". Cf. the Greek: "μη ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν [ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν]".

<sup>4</sup> Central to this imagery is Ariadne's crown — *duo segni in cielo* (*Paradiso*, 13, 13).

regained by man. From it flow the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, moving directly to the end of salvation, which is union with God. Now, prudence, one of the four cardinal moral virtues, is peculiarly directive of *ea quæ sunt ad finem*.<sup>1</sup> Grace makes the way of salvation possible; prudence puts man on the way; and charity moves him on the way. For Dante, the line of approach of prudence is not *motus rectus*, but *motus obliquus*. It is spiral, like Dante's own infernal descent, and ascent through Purgatory to Paradise. The Sun also ascends in spirals, and in the heaven of the Sun the poet observes that he has followed a similar course — *io era con lui*.<sup>2</sup> One cannot look straight at the Sun, but must by indirection find out direction. This he does by the exercise of prudence. But the ascent to the Empyrean is not wholly oblique. When Beatrice (love) comes to his aid in the heaven of the contemplatives, where he is addressed by Saint Benedict, his ascent is rectilinear.

This almost endlessly rich symbolism pervades the *Commedia*. We go on to read that Benedict addressed Dante, informing him that if he "saw", as did the holy founder, the love that burned among the blessed, the poet's *concepts* would be *expressed*.<sup>3</sup> Dante begs grace to see the form of Saint Benedict divested of its splendour — *con immagine scoperta* — to which he receives the reply that his request will be granted in the Empyrean (*l'ultima spera*) — where every desire is fulfilled.<sup>4</sup> As he is speaking, the assembly gathers itself together as into one, rolling upwards like an eddying wind; and it is at this point that Beatrice, prevailing over Dante's nature, carries him not obliquely, as he had hitherto moved, but straight up, so that in an instant he was in the heaven of the Fixed Stars.<sup>5</sup> There, poised at a dizzy height with the support of Beatrice,

<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *S. Th.* 2-2, 47, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, 10, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 22, 31-33:

"Se tu vedessi,  
Com' io, la carità che tra noi arde,  
Li tuoi concetti sarebbero espressi."

<sup>4</sup> Dante again meets Benedict there (*op. cit.* 32, 35); for the blessed, although they have different heavens assigned to them, have all a "seat" in the Empyrean.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* 22, 100-102:

"La dolce Donna dietro a lor mi pinse  
Con un sol cenno su per quella scala;  
Sì sua virtù la mia natura vinse."

he is admonished by her, before he may proceed further, to look down and contemplate (*rimirare*) what lies beneath, so that his heart may blithely present itself (*appresentarsi*) to the triumphant throng that is now exultantly approaching.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere, after the manner of Bonaventure, Dante makes the founders of the two great orders of friars princes to escort the Church. One, Francis, is seraphic in the heat of charity: the other, Dominic, is cherubic in the light of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> One of the favourite questions of the Middle Ages was whether intellect or will had the primacy. From the middle of the thirteenth century, when Albertus Magnus began teaching in Paris, the emphasis on the intellectual aspect of religion gained ground. Very broadly it may be said that the Dominicans adhered to this emphasis, while the Franciscans stressed the "practical" aspect: such, at least, was the popular view of the matter, and Dante uses the two orders as symbols to show the complementary character of intellect or knowledge on the one hand and will or love on the other. Both are necessary: *ad un fine fûr l' opere sue*.<sup>3</sup> So, by a charming

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 22, 127-132:

"E però, prima che tu più t' inlei,  
Rimira in giuso, e vedi quanto mondo  
Sotto li piedi già esser ti fèi;  
Si che 'l tuo cuor, quantunque può, giocondo  
S' appresenti alla turba trionfante,  
Che lieta vien per questo etereo tondo."

It is with this preparation that Dante is to behold the vision of Christ with the Church Triumphant. We suppose that his will is thus prepared for action by a ground of knowledge: as we should say, the empathetic activity of mystical experience had not yet begun, but he was mounting the ladder towards it.

<sup>2</sup> Bonaventure had ordered the regulars of the Church after the model of the celestial hierarchy. Contemplatives come highest, divided into three grades, viz. (1) the ancient orders (such as the Cistercians, Carthusians and Premonstratensians), who correspond to the Thrones, (2) the Dominicans, who, dedicated primarily to "speculation" and secondarily to *unctio* or holy meditation, correspond to the Cherubim, and (3) the Franciscans, who, intended by their founder (according to Bonaventure) to engage in study only to the extent that they "tasted" mystically, correspond to the Seraphim. (Cf. *De Septem Gradibus Contemplationis, princip.*) In so exalting the Franciscans, Bonaventure seems to have thought of them as a brotherhood that might at length consummate the Church (*Illuminationes Eccl. in Hexameron*, serm. 22) (*Opera*, Rome, 1558, vol. 1, p. 68 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> *Paradiso*, 11, 42. Cf. Aquinas, *S. Th.* 2-2, 183, 2.

arrangement, Dante makes the Franciscan Bonaventure tell of the shortcomings of his own order, while, with equal courtesy, the Dominican Thomas exhibits the defects of his.<sup>1</sup> In the twelfth canto of the *Paradiso*, the interdependence of intellect and will (or, knowledge and love) is shown in a procession of symbols. They are millstones, unable to grind without one another,<sup>2</sup> two circles of a rainbow, one reflected by the other,<sup>3</sup> and the wheels of the Church's chariot, which must be in alignment.<sup>4</sup> Dante even compares them to two garlands of sempiternal roses. Here is very delicate mediaeval symbolism; for "rose" means, according to the context, Christ, Mary, the Church, or the individual soul; but while Christ is a "true" rose and self-coloured, Mary, or the Church, or the soul, is a rose stained in the blood of Christ the Saviour.<sup>5</sup>

It would be foolish to read into the work of any poet a fully considered mystical system. But Dante stands in a peculiar position, as the spokesman of an age when mysticism grew almost as unnoticed as art. In no age was it less a hothouse product. We should look far in Christian literature to find a work more imbued with the spirit of mediaeval mysticism than that in which the last canto is a prayer of Saint Bernard addressed to the Virgin Mother (*figlia del tuo Figlio*),<sup>6</sup> that Dante, as representing his age, should somehow "see" the mystery of the Trinity. It is evident that this is achieved by soaring beyond all the rich symbolism of the *Commedia*, to

<sup>1</sup> Of course Bonaventure represents will/love, and Thomas intellect/knowledge. Soon afterwards, as Thomas ends his speech and Beatrice, who always means "love", is about to begin, Dante says:

"Dal centro al cerchio, e sì dal cerchio al centro  
Muovesi l' acqua in un ritondo vaso,  
Secondo ch' è percossa fuori o dentro "

(*Paradiso*, 14, 1-3).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* 12, 1 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 12, 10 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 12, 106-108.

<sup>5</sup> Albertus Magnus, *De Laud. B.M.V.* 12, 4, 33-34: "Et nota, quod Christus rosa, Maria rosa, Ecclesia rosa, fidelis anima rosa. . . . Christus . . . vera fuit rosa, sanguine proprio rubricatus. Ipsa (Maria) non suo sanguine, sed sanguine Filii rubricata. . . . Rosa enim coloris est ignei, et per ignem caritas designatur" (cf. *Purgatorio*, 29, 122-123).

<sup>6</sup> *Paradiso*, 33, 1.

what we should call an empathetic act of the will in love.<sup>1</sup> Dante's feet are always firmly planted in the things of sense, but his will soars on wings of love. He beheld "all properties of substance and of accident compounded, yet the whole one individual light"; but he experienced all in the depth of "one volume of love". On reflection, there was no knowledge of the mystical experience of love, which is essentially indescribable; but there still "trickled in his heart" that "sense of sweet" that had been the point of his departure, and which we interpret as some kind of grasp of the infinite through the finite, in the interpenetration of which the Middle Ages very profoundly believed.

### § 59. *The Spanish Mystics*

Early in the sixteenth century we are introduced by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)<sup>2</sup> to an age which we shall oppose to the preceding one, which we called the Golden Age of Catholic Mysticism, by calling it the Golden Age of Catholic Mystics. For when a very different spirit had superseded the mediaeval, and mysticism had ceased to be the wild flower of Christendom, the Church began to produce instead a spectacularly swift procession

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 33, 58-63 :

"Qual è colui che sonnando vede,  
E dopo 'l sogno la passione impressa  
Rimane, e l' altro alla mente non riede,  
Cotal son io, chè quasi tutta cessa  
Mia visione, ed ancor mi distilla  
Nel cuor lo dolce che nacque da essa."

And (*op. cit.* 33, 82-90):

"O abbondante grazia, ond' io presunsi  
Ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna  
Tanto, che la veduta vi consunsi !  
Nel suo profondo vidi che s' interna  
Legato con amore in un volume  
Ciò che per l' universo si squaderna  
Sustanzia ed accidente e lor costume,  
Tutti conflati insieme per tal modo,  
Che ciò ch' io dico è un semplice lume."

<sup>2</sup> 1491 is the generally accepted date of Loyola's birth; but Polanco argues for 1495, and a tradition that he was twenty-six at his conversion (known to have been in 1521) supports this date.

of men and women who were mystical in an exceptional degree. It was quite recognizably a new kind of mysticism ; but it was still no less well grafted on the old.

Bred in the tradition of the military aristocracy and converted to the service of the Church in his youth, the Jesuit founder introduced to the Church a spirit of dashing chivalry that immediately invigorated her. He was scarcely a mystic in the sense that we should call Teresa a mystic ; but in the *Ejercicios* one soon becomes acclimatized to the new mystical atmosphere. Nothing if not a loyal churchman, he specifies rules for having the mind of the Church (*reglas para sentir con la Iglesia*),<sup>1</sup> and sees uniquely the mystical significance of holy obedience. Devoid as they are of literary grace and style, the *Ejercicios* are packed with imagery : the exercitant, at an early stage,<sup>2</sup> is to reflect on (*discurrir por*) each creature in turn, each fruit, each bird, each fish. It is by the will that we enter into communion with God in mystical experience, and to attain this the will must first be trained. It has to make one effort of the imagination after the other, despising no preoccupation with the sensory, till it isolates an image relevant to the devotional situation. Specially pleasing to God and productive of a lively faith is the exercise of "applying the five senses" to contemplation. This means, we are told, that the exercitant is to "see" Christ with the eyes of the imagination, "hear" him speaking, even "smell" the fragrance of his human soul.<sup>3</sup> Ignatius uses the term "contemplation" in the sense of mental prayer based on tableaux of scenes such as the Annunciation or Crucifixion, intuited without external aid. He values such processions of imagery in the mind as a necessary means of disciplining the will ; but contemplation is in order to attain love (*para alcanzar amor*) ;<sup>4</sup> and this love consists of mutual communications from either side.<sup>5</sup> One must not seek it for its own sake, to have a "rich experience", but only for the sake of God ; for Ignatius warned his exercitants against being in love with God's love instead of being in love with God. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Ejercicios* (ed. Barcelona, 1892), pp. 196-197.

<sup>2</sup> First week, second exercise.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* second week, fifth contemplation.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 126-127.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 124.

in the Jesuit spirit to do the exercises so as to dispose oneself to respond, if God should speak, that is, one is not to set out to be a mystic, but only to learn how to respond to the love of God if it come. After such discipline one operates more and more, as Luis de la Palma puts it, *cum affectu et simplici intuitu*,<sup>1</sup> that is, we gradually eliminate the imagery, and (such is our interpretation) are ready for empathetic activity.

One of the early figures in this new Spanish tradition, and certainly one of the most brilliant, is Saint Teresa (1515-1582), the remarkable woman of whom it has been said that her temperament suggests that she became a nun by convention and a saint by accident.<sup>2</sup> In the *Moradas*, Teresa depicts the mystic way as a suite of seven concentric rooms forming a palace. The first three rooms are accessible to the devout generally, in the course of their ordinary worship — there is nothing distinctively mystical about them.<sup>3</sup> But few enter the fourth room.<sup>4</sup> Here are two fountains with basins of water. One fountain receives water from a considerable distance, and artificially, by aqueducts; but the other is constructed near the source of the spring, so that the basin is gradually and silently filled. The former fountain represents the spiritual sweetness proceeding from meditation on created things, which we draw "as it were with our thoughts"; but the latter fountain receives water from its source immediately, that is, from God.<sup>5</sup> Why should there be *two* fountains? Teresa describes both carefully, although, of course, it is to the fountain served immediately by the spring that she draws our chief attention. The other, providing the sweetness that proceeds from meditation on created things,

<sup>1</sup> *Praxis Viae Spiritualis*, Instructio pro meditatione.

<sup>2</sup> V. Sackville-West, *The Eagle and the Dove*, 5, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> These correspond to the first degree of Prayer in the *Vida*, a less elaborate work, written fifteen years earlier.

<sup>4</sup> This corresponds to the Prayer of Quiet (Second Water) in the *Vida*.

<sup>5</sup> *Moradas*, 4, 2 (*Obras*, ed. Burgos, 1915 ff.; vol. 4, pp. 53-54). This passage is introduced by a reference to a certain kind of spiritual tenderness that is mixed up with passion to such an extent as to cause fits of sobbing and other external motions. Of these Teresa discreetly observes that, having no personal experience of such a kind, she cannot pronounce upon its value, except to say that the experience that interests her is quite different from any that could produce effects of this kind. She calls her own experience *gustos de Dios*.

is nevertheless part of the picture. In the outer rooms, poisonous reptiles abounded — the spring was far off and the thirsty soul had to use water that reached it by aqueducts. Now it is at the very source of reality ; but still the two fountains stand side by side, as if the still, cool water of the one were strongly contrasted with the movement of the conducted water in the other fountain. At this stage, understanding and memory are free — only the will is captive in love — and are able to realize with whom they are (*en cabe quién están*).<sup>1</sup> But there is a reminder that the use of the inferior fountain may help or hinder this union with the will of God.<sup>2</sup> It seems to us that in this, Teresa's fourth room, aesthesis is in a manner still present, but that the aspirant is at the stage where he is called to dissociate himself from it. The inferior fountain must be there, but it is a nuisance, obstructing the aspirant's preoccupation with the calm of the fountain that is by the spring itself. We shall have more to say on this as we draw our conclusions to the present chapter.

Teresa now changes her metaphor. She perceives a fragrance, but one that is not apprehended in the ordinary way, for it is as if the reality of the fragrance subsisted in the depths of one's own being. Instead of seeming to enter from outside, it seems to begin inside and permeate outwards.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, she says, it is to be felt even in one's own body, but not as apprehended from an external reality. Again, one perceives a fire that has started inside one, and is burning from inside until it has set one all aflame. This may likewise be felt in one's body, but again not as by an agent external to it.<sup>4</sup> We connect this stage with the transition to the

<sup>1</sup> *Camino de perfección*, 31 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 3, p. 144).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Vida*, 14-15 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 1, pp. 101-115).

<sup>3</sup> For another instance of this metaphor in Saint Teresa, *vide Conceptos*, 4 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 4, p. 248).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *infra*, § 68, our discussion of the mystical "fine point" of the soul. If this is truly kinaesthetic experience, some observations on such experience by Professor H. H. Price may be relevant: "Perhaps we may suppose that in the case of any one observer there is only one somatic sense-datum at any time. This one single voluminous datum constitutes our total bodily feeling at that time. It differs from visual and tactual sense-data in that it does not sensibly face in a certain direction. Every visual sense-datum is a 'front' as opposed to a 'back'. It is true that certain tactual sense-data, e.g. that which we obtain when some small thing such as a marble is completely contained in our mouth or



one we described under (*d*) in our account of the philosophical grounds of Catholic mysticism.<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth room (that of spiritual betrothal, as opposed to spiritual marriage, which is the final stage), all the faculties sleep. One remains in this room only *brevísimo tiempo*.<sup>2</sup> It seems that here the soul is in a trance, oblivious of all experience ; and yet almost in the same breath Teresa calls it one of great joy. Perhaps her meaning is clearest when she reverts to the figure of the silk-worm, which, having fed upon the foliage in the Church's garden and reached maturity, spins the silk prison in which it is to die so that it may emerge a butterfly.

"Sweet pains" mark the sixth or penultimate stage, the *vistas de esposas*, in which the betrothed "see one another" in incipient union. We suppose them to be the pains of readjustment, the agony of waiting for the *passio divinorum*. It is as if a spark (*centella*) were entering the soul from God, causing most welcome pain (*siente ser herida sabrosísimamente*), but insufficient to cause the complete ignition of the soul in the full union that will eliminate all dissatisfaction.<sup>3</sup> Then, after lingering for long at the door of the innermost room, the soul at last enters it. This last stage is the spiritual marriage. God reveals himself in a manner hitherto not experienced. The room appears at first to be in total darkness, but this is because it is filled with a dazzling light. Teresa refers to this state as an "intellectual vision", insisting that no images at all now enter the experience. The bride is abandoned to God with the inseparability of mutual love. Although Teresa uses the symbol of a river flowing into the ocean, there can be no absorption, for

our closed fist, are complete three-dimensional expanses, and include front, back, top, bottom, and sides all at once. Yet even these have no insides, and do not 'fill' the volume which they 'enclose'. But the somatic sense-datum *completely fills* a certain volume, though usually with but a faint intensity, which grows still fainter towards the volume's boundaries; so that although the 'voluminous' datum has in fact a certain tri-dimensional shape (otherwise it could not be voluminous), it is not easy to tell what shape it is" (H. H. Price, *Perception*, p. 232).

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 56, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the swiftness of the mystical experience of Saint Gregory, which is like "stealing a glance" (*supra*, § 57, p. 164).

<sup>3</sup> *Moradas*, 6, 2 (*Obras*, ed. cit. vol. 4, pp. 107-109).

there is reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> We must suppose that the most fully empathetic union attainable on earth is in this state attained.

Loyola taught the world, Teresa the cloister ; but there is probably much less difference between them than superficially appears. Loyola makes little attempt to give an account of the mystic ascent in terms of the new technique, confining himself chiefly to the antecedent discipline. But Teresa may almost be said to begin where he leaves off. We may regard them as complementary to each other. Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), on the other hand, is in many respects unique. We have already referred to him at some length to illustrate a special point.<sup>2</sup> He was educated by the Society (as was Saint Teresa, to whom he owed much), and influenced by the *Exercises* ; but unlike Ignatius and Teresa, who were not literary stylists, he wrote poetry that ranks amongst the best in the Spanish tongue. He is peculiarly sensitive to aesthetic experience : every stanza of his verse is drenched with rich imagery, and in the prayer of the transformed soul the word " beauty " (*hermosura*) occurs twenty times in the course of a few sentences.<sup>3</sup> From such lips the warning against the danger of imagery impeding the aspirant's path, and it is particularly grave, even for a mystic, is not difficult to respect. But let us see what he says.

To John of the Cross, even a true vision or voice from heaven is of less value than the smallest act of humility.<sup>4</sup> He notes Teresa's descriptions of the *phantasmata* that accompany the earlier stages of the mystic way ; but he insists that at least we should not concern ourselves with them. He knows that imagery is a necessary antecedent of mystical experience, but takes the view that even in the early steps the aspirant should strive to rid himself of them.<sup>5</sup> He denounces those directors who insist on specific kinds of medita-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 7, 2 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 4, p. 187). Here she also describes the union as like two windows in a room through which one great light enters.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 54, p. 144 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Cántico espiritual*, 36 (*Obras, ed. Toledo*, 1912 ff. ; vol. 2, p. 345).

<sup>4</sup> *Avisos*, 335 (*Obras, vol. 3*, p. 53).

<sup>5</sup> One must remember that, in contrast to Ignatius, who desired to reach all, John of the Cross wrote for a more cultivated reader, who might only be sluggish in practical action, in will. Loyola presupposed that his aspirants might be sluggish in theoretic activity, that is, aesthetically, and so more fundamentally sluggish.

tion, painting their "miserable daubs" where God himself is at work on the picture.<sup>1</sup> But, while he presupposes in his aspirants a considerable aesthetic groundwork, he presses them on at once to a vigorous act of the will directed to union with God, not pausing so much as to gather a flower by the way.<sup>2</sup> On this road the pilgrim is not allowed even a staff: he must be upstanding (*muy en pie*) without the support of the senses.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Saint Teresa, John of the Cross says but little of the illuminative stage that supersedes the Night of Sense. For him it is but a wistful glimmer, although like the blaze of noon compared with the far more terrible Night of the Spirit that succeeds it. The whole of this mystic's work is written, as it were, in a minor key. And when the soul, as bride, bewails the absence of the beloved, crying, "Whither hast thou vanished, like the hart, having first wounded me?" the creatures who overhear the cry answer that he has gone by, scattering a thousand graces through the woods and groves, clothing them, as he sped past, with his beauty. For her, however, such news brings little consolation, for she desires, in her love, only himself.<sup>4</sup> While none more than she is aware of the beauty of her beloved, none can be so dissatisfied as she with the mere apprehension of it. Nothing less than his love will suffice. High on the rugged

<sup>1</sup> *Llama de amor viva*, 3, 34 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Cántico espiritual*, 3 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 2, pp. 189-190):

"Buscando mis amores,  
Iré por esos montes y riberas,  
Ni cogeré las flores,  
Ni temeré las fieras,  
Y pasaré los fuertes y fronteras."

<sup>3</sup> *Noche oscura del sentido*, 12 (*Obras, ed. cit.* vol. 2, p. 41).

<sup>4</sup> The *Cántico espiritual* opens with the question:

"¿A dónde te escondiste,  
Amado, y me dejaste con gemido?  
Como el ciervo huiste,  
Habiéndome herido;  
Salí tras ti clamando, y eras ido."

To which the reply is made by the creatures that overhear:

"Mil gracias derramando  
Pasó por estos sotos con presura.  
Y yéndolos mirando,  
Con sola su figura  
Vestidos los dejó de su hermosura."

slopes of Carmel she will find him. There the air is rarefied, beyond the clouds, although Carmel may rise from fair plains. There God and the soul are bound by the cord of love (*hilo de amor*), remaining different in substance, but *as* one in love. This experience is called knowledge, but it is knowledge "stripped of accidents and *phantasmata*" and received "passively".<sup>1</sup> We interpret it as empathetic activity of the soul in God. While the soul *appears* to be God, and God the soul, it is not so in fact, but only so appears because of the grip of the *hilo*.<sup>2</sup>

Now, we must be careful not to take for an analytic, philosophical account of mystical experience what is but a method of preaching.<sup>3</sup> John of the Cross is a poet, and speaks as a poet, often calling his aspirants to do what is literally impossible. He will sometimes say that his senses died, when in fact he means only that they were subjected to his will; for it is "among the lilies" that he leaves his care.<sup>4</sup> But when all that is said, it is still true that this great mystic, although writing in such a beautiful style, makes greater and more immediate demands upon the will to reject the things of sense that it may be freed to the love of God, than do most mystics that we know. Or perhaps we should say, rather, that he starts higher in the mystic ladder than do most, and dwells longer than most on its higher rungs. He is so deeply concerned with what happens at the heights, that he has little time to deal with the technique of rejecting imagery, and therefore must be specially

<sup>1</sup> Saint Thomas teaches that a knowledge is "given" in contemplation. This cannot be the knowledge we recognize as grounded in aesthesis. We regard it as a practical activity of the will in empathetic union, when the mystic *patitur divina*, although aesthesis is not, of course, wholly dissociated from it. We consider this later.

<sup>2</sup> *Cántico espiritual*, 31, *anotación* (*Obras*, ed. cit. vol. 2, p. 324).

<sup>3</sup> We have already observed with what caution one must interpret the mystics philosophically, especially in the later traditions, and have indicated how one ought to read them. *Supra*, §§ 54-55, esp. p. 152 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Canciones del alma*, in the poem beginning "En una noche oscura", widely regarded as the most beautiful mystical poem in the Spanish language:

"Quedéme y olvidéme,  
El rostro recliné sobre el Amado;  
Cesó todo, y dejéme,  
Dejando mi cuidado  
Entre las azucenas olvidado."

loud in his warnings, since he is, for this reason, most in danger of being misunderstood.

### § 60. *The Salesian Tradition*

When the challenge of humanism had thoroughly confronted the Church, she began to produce mysticism of a fresh type. In the Salesian tradition we find her meeting the needs of a new class of persons, notably in a certain *milieu* in France, where, it has been wittily said, the *vie spirituelle* was in danger of becoming *à la mode*. Saint Francis of Sales (1567-1622), apostle of *pur amour*, appeared at a time when theologians, especially the Dominicans and Jesuits, were challenging the place of mystical theology. Suarez held that contemplation was simply ordinary mental prayer, culminating in an intuition of God as the crowning point of a normal theological approach.<sup>1</sup> Dissatisfaction with such an outlook and with the generally rigorous view of the Church, by this time on her defensive against the wave of humanism that had broken in on Europe, was widely felt; and the delicate mystical approach of Saint Francis of Sales appealed to men and women of the world who were educated in the "new" way.

Francis taught that the saint, by reason of his friendship with God, must inevitably excel not only as a man of God, but also as a man among men. The perfect saint will be also the perfect gentleman. How, indeed, are we to suppose that a rude, ill-mannered person can be accustomed to *entretiens* with God? And to have such *entretiens* is the mark of the saint. If one's manners depend on the company one keeps, as surely they must, ought not the devout to excel in charm? Indeed, is there not a truly spiritual *chic*, a Christian elegance, a specific Christian courtesy that must be more charming than any other?

The Salesian ideal was the synthesis of what had hitherto been the seemingly irreconcilable tendencies to self-development on the one hand and surrender to God on the other. It had a larger measure of optimism in it than had been common before. If there be a higher and a lower part in man's soul, the lower is alien from

<sup>1</sup> *E.g. De Oratione*, 2, 13, 36 (*Opera*, Paris, 1859, vol. 14, p. 186): "Contemplatio . . . consistit in simplici intuitu. . . ."

man's true personality. According to Pliny, if a rainbow touched a bush called the Aspalatus, it exhaled a fragrance sweeter than lilies ; and so the Redemption, touching human affairs, brings forth a greater loveliness than would have existed in a condition of innocence. *O felix culpa, quae tantum et talem meruit habere Redemptorem!*<sup>1</sup> So, for Francis, two virtues such as humility and confidence, far from being in any way opposed, cannot fully exist apart. And "pure love", far from being merely the bond of perfection, as for long it had been recognized to be, is the starting-point as well as the end of the spiritual life. Asceticism has, of course, its place in the Salesian approach, but only as the hand-maid of *pur amour*. In short, against the rising dogmatists who questioned the claims of the mystics to a special avenue by which certain persons might be led to God, Saint Francis of Sales presents the mystical approach as normal for all. This reorientation of the devotional life of Christendom, whether right or wrong, was certainly not a capitulation to humanist claims ; for it regarded humanism as in possession of the wrong end of the stick.

It is plain that Francis expected that from the contemplation of nature one might find an incentive to the love of God. Like the mediaeval Hugh of Saint Victor, he regarded the whole world as a book written with God's finger ; and he repudiated the idea of a sharp cleavage between the things of God and the things of the world. Especially is this true of his doctrine of love ; for he

<sup>1</sup> "O happy guilt, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer !" This specifically Christian utterance is from the long hymn "Exultet jam angelica turba caelorum", which is sung, in the Latin Church, by the deacon at the *benedictio cerei* on Easter Eve. Martene (*De Antiq. Eccl. Ritibus*, 4, p. 145) accepted its Augustinian authorship ; but its "O certe necessarium Adae peccatum" contradicts the explicit denial by Augustine that "hominis peccatum necessarium fuit" (*De Civitate Dei*, 14, 23). That mediaeval devotion in England was readily captivated by the theme is evident from the anonymous fifteenth-century *Adam lay ibowndyn* :

"Ne hadde the appil take ben,  
the appil take ben,  
ne hadde never our lady  
a ben Hevene qwen.  
blyssid be the tyme  
that appil take was !  
therfore we mown syngyn  
*Deo gracias.*"

regards human love and friendship as intimately connected with mystical union with God.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he does not lack the perspicacity and common sense to see the limits beyond which such a doctrine cannot go, although he would not call them limits, preferring rather to say that when human love is not worthy to be so intimately connected with the love of God, it simply is not worthy to be called human love.

We are not concerned with the extent to which Francis was right in all this. Our interest in him lies in the fact that his emphasis brings into relief the analogy between mystical experience and the highest human love and friendship. Other mystics have told us this, but less pointedly. Other mystics, moreover, have been peculiarly suspicious of *aestheta*, which may allure the aspirant from that mystical union where *cor ad cor loquitur* and spirit meets Spirit in "gentle, subtle touch". They have feared that the Devil would take advantage of our inevitable delight in the beauty we have discovered, suggesting to us that we have arrived at the summit of Mount Carmel when in fact we have scarcely begun its ascent, after a journey across desert and moor. To Francis, such an arrangement of the situation evidently seemed artificial. For him the summit of Carmel is visible from the moment that any advance in its direction is contemplated, and must continue to be so visible throughout the ascent. It is to be seen as plainly from the lush meadows and rich rose-gardens that we pass as from the chill moors and arid wastes. The soul does not suddenly leap into the arms of her divine lover, but glides fluently towards him.<sup>2</sup> Francis speaks of the soul's continual perception, in contemplation, of the divine presence, and so can regard prayer as an end in itself, not a means.<sup>3</sup>

Human friendship (*la charité fraternelle*), the hall-mark of the well-being of any cloistered community, is intimately connected with the mystic's ultimate aim. To advising persons living in the

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that Plotinus himself was a good Aristotelian when he interpreted the myth of Eros, seeing in the earthly love not a rival to the heavenly but its groping, ineffective imitator (John Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, c. 4, p. 94). This is good Catholic, but characteristic Salesian doctrine. Nygren (in *Agape and Eros*) takes an opposite point of view.

<sup>2</sup> *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, 6, 12 (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1821, vol. 1 of the *Traité*, p. 425).

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction à la vie dévote*, 1, 1-2 (*Œuvres*, ed. cit.).

world on the question of good friendships and bad, the saint gives six chapters of the *Introduction à la vie dévote*.<sup>1</sup> Worldly friendship adversely affects the judgment and causes *le vertige*, while true friendship has *les yeux clair-voyans*.<sup>2</sup> We are to avoid friendships that are not conducive to the mystic goal, to which true friendship ought naturally to lead. On the other hand, the extent to which we can use unpromising situations to our spiritual advantage depends on our present attainment in the mystical direction of our will, just as the extent to which we are able to see beauty in the frying-pan depends on the maturity of our aesthetic experience. The saint refers to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary,<sup>3</sup> who took her place in court without losing any of her devotion, rather being the more stimulated by vanities and worldly pomp to greater fervour. Only little fires, the saint observes, have to be sheltered : great ones are fanned by the wind. Such doctrine is not less true for having been very acceptable in fashionable circles in seventeenth-century France.

The Salesian tradition thus extended the boundaries of the "mystical state" so as almost to identify them with those of the "state of grace", and made human friendship distinctly analogous to mystical experience. It is a commonplace of theology that we cannot know God as he knows us. But *caritas nunquam excidit* ; and so it may be possible for us in some sense to love God as he

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit., ed. cit.* 3, 17-22, pp. 212-234. As John Burnaby (*Amor Dei*, c. 1, p. 18) observes, "Eros and Agape are not the only Greek words for love. The Philia in which Aristotle discovered the richest endowment of human personality is strange neither to the Old Testament nor to the New." This is obvious enough, and, no doubt, was obvious to the devout within the cloister and outside it long before Francis of Sales appeared ; but it is very noteworthy that he should feel it necessary to make so much of the point, and that it should become a characteristic mark of the Salesian tradition.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit., loc. cit., ed. cit.* p. 225. The saint likens worldly friendship to "le miel d'Héraclée" which is "plus doux à la langue que le miel ordinaire, à raison de l'aconit qui luy donne un surcroist de douceur" (p. 224).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit., ed. cit.* 3, 34, p. 277 : "Quant à Ste. Élisabeth de Hongrie, elle jouïoit et dansoit par fois, se trouvant ès assemblées de passe-temps, sans intérêt de sa dévotion, laquelle estoit bien enracinée dedans son âme, si que comme les rochers qui sont autour du lac de Riette croissent estant battus des vagues ; ainsi sa dévotion croissoit parmy les pompes et vanitez, ausquelles sa condition l'exposoit. Ce sont les grands feux qui s'enflamment au vent, mais les petits s'esteignent si on ne les y porte à couvert."



loves us.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, Francis of Sales serves as an interesting culmination to our review of the Catholic mystics by focussing our attention on what we believe to be the crucial analogy in Catholic mysticism. If there be such an analogy, it would seem that whatever be the relation between *aesthesis* and mystical experience, it cannot be disconnected with the more easily ascertainable relation between *aesthesis* and *philia*.

### § 61. *The Rejection of Imagery*

We must now deal with a difficult point, the elucidation of which is a necessary antecedent to the conclusion of the present chapter. We have found that, with varying emphases, the Catholic mystics all concur in an insistence that the rejection of imagery is a necessary antecedent of mystical experience. Aesthetic experience is not even like mystical experience, which, if it must be likened to anything, is to be likened rather to human love or friendship at its highest. Nor is it possible to hold that this rejection of imagery is something that occurs at a very high stage in the mystic ascent, just as the mystic is reaching the summit of Carmel and is about to enter on the spiritual marriage. For the attested fact is that it is demanded of the aspirant almost at the beginning of his journey, when he has to turn away from the *pulchra* of the sensory world and turn in upon his own soul. At this point, however, it seems plain that aesthetic experience is very vivid. I am required, if I would ascend Carmel, to turn in upon my soul in order to become aware of the intensity of my own activity in my aesthetic experience. Unless my aesthetic experience is vivid I cannot expect, in the introspective act that we have called "aut-empathy", to catch my mind in the vivid act of expressing vivid images; and unless I am able to do this, such introspection as I may have will be of little avail to move me on my journey. Moreover, it appears to be psychologically necessary that, even when I have genuinely

<sup>1</sup> Aquinas says (*S. Th.* 1-2, 27, 2 ad 2): "Contingit quod aliquid plus ametur quam cognoscatur, quia potest perfecte amari etiamsi non perfecte cognoscatur". The extremely difficult question of the equality of love between God and the soul in mystical union is admirably discussed in one of the untranslated appendices to *Les Degrés du savoir*, by Jacques Maritain (App. 8, *Le Amará tanto como es amada*).

attained this "aut-empathy", I accompany it with some kind of analogical picture. That is to say, I may "imagine" my own soul as a moving light or a burning flame, although, discursively, I know that it simply is not so, except analogically. If I should elide the analogy, forgetting that my soul is not in fact a light or a flame at all, my introspective, "aut-empathetic" act would be extinguished. If, however, I keep the analogy as an analogy, I may go on to contemplate God as the "light" by which we irradiate the beauties of sense, while still, in the same analogical fashion, "picturing" God as a light or a perfume. Once again, I shall fail dismally if I allow myself to be trapped into any elision of the fact that I have made an analogy.

Now, to accomplish this, I have had to reject imagery; and yet I have been permitted to retain certain accompanying images, by way of analogy, without invalidating my introspective act, or my contemplation of God, in the least. But this is not, strictly, a mystical renunciation of imagery. It is, in fact, the kind of renunciation that, in varying degrees, most people who are at all accustomed to abstract thinking have to make regularly. It is certainly to be expected in the prayer-life of the educated and thoughtful churchman who lays no claim of any kind to mystical experience. Indeed, many mystical writers say little about it, because they presuppose it in anyone aspiring to Mount Carmel.

What no mystic can neglect to mention, however, is the properly mystical renunciation of imagery which the aspirant is now called on to make. And now there is no question of accompanying, analogical, "pictures". Indeed, it is just such "pictures" that we have to reject. Nevertheless, the "pictures" are themselves an element in the mystical renunciation. A rich man who has sold his possessions to give to the poor, that he may have treasure in heaven, is not simply a poor man: he is a rich man who has renounced his riches. There is a sense in which one must renounce one's learning to enter into the kingdom of heaven; but one does not thereby become an ignoramus. When the mystic makes this renunciation of images, he projects himself into a darkness that he knows to lie beyond them: he locates God in the darkness that is beyond the images, and to which, in the renunciation of

them, the images point. Surely it is the doctrine of the rejection of imagery that distinguishes in the first instance mystical experience from neurotic trance. In the latter, there is, of course, no renunciation: the neurotic patient merely lets go his imagery, such as it may be. In the former, there must not only be a vigorous act of renunciation, but there must have been already a certain kind of imagery to be renounced, namely, that kind which we have described as forming part of the earlier, pre-mystical, steps that lead to true mystical experience.

When the renunciation is sufficiently accomplished, something happens which need not at the moment concern us — the *passio divinorum*. When the mystic comes to describe what happens, “express the ineffable”, he must, of course, use aesthetic figures. The more sensuous and vivid they are the better. Naturally, he is acutely aware of the danger of being misunderstood by people who have no adequate experience of the renunciation he had to make in order to achieve his experience. But it may be that, as he writes, there is an accompanying aesthetic “comment” in his own mind *side by side* with the memory of the *passio divinorum*. It may be, however, that all the aesthetic ground that is then there is that of imagery which he had rejected, before the experience of union, but which hovers in the antechambers of his mind, as having given significance to his state of image-renunciation. For example, when John of the Cross writes,<sup>1</sup> “O flame of living love! . . . O soft hand, O delicate touch! . . . O lamps of fire!” these figures may be new, fresh comments upon the mystical encounter — a genuinely fresh translation, so far as one is possible, of the mystical experience in terms of aesthesis; or they may be simply the images, or images closely connected with these, which the saint rejected as a prelude to the mystical encounter. As a matter of ordinary psychology, we should think the second alternative the more likely one; but it is not for us a specially important point.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Llama de amor viva*.

<sup>2</sup> The memorial that Pascal carried about with him seems to suggest the use of the rejected imagery, or something like it, in the mystic's description of the encounter. Specifying the date of the encounter as “jour de St Clément, pape et martyre . . . veille de St Chrysogone”, he exclaims, “FEU — Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob, non des philosophes et scavans. . . .”

What is important is the fact that there is aesthetic comment at all, that it is possible for the mystic in any way at all to describe his encounter, after he has enjoyed it, as an encounter with a "flame" or a "light" or a "soft hand", when he knows perfectly well, and most earnestly desires his readers to know, that it is an ineffable experience that is not even *like* any of these things as they are understood in our aesthetic experience.

We distinguish, therefore, two rejections: (1) the prelude to introspection or "aut-empathy", and (2) the prelude to the mystical experience itself. The second is, of course, the proper and significant renunciation in mysticism. In (1) we turn from all manner of *aestheta* — trees, flowers, swans, castles, and humming-birds — but in (2) we reject certain imagery which we have intuited/expressed in a peculiar situation, namely, that of having recast discursive thought about God in the crucible and intuited/expressed imagery in the course of pre-mystical contemplation of God. When the mystic has reached the stage of this second, properly mystical, rejection, it seems that there can be no question, as there certainly was in the first case, of rejecting imagery in general, because the attention is now vigorously focussed on certain very specific images, symbols of God; and it is these which the mystic evidently now makes the point of his departure. It need hardly be said that unless he is in a position to reject *such* imagery, he is certainly not in a position to have the mystical experience.

To sum up information about the mystics' use and renunciation of aesthesis, which our review of the work of a certain number of mystics has yielded, we may affirm that, (a) while making full allowance for the hyperbolic language which it is quite legitimate for a mystic to use, in view of the nature of mystical literature and his aim in writing it, there is no doubt at all that the rejection of imagery is a very real and important fact, signifying the mystics' attempt not only to turn their attention away from imagery but to *keep* it away from imagery as far as is humanly possible, as long as the mystical state lasts; (b) while many mystics are also great imaginatives, that is to say, have rich aesthetic intuitions/expressions, it cannot be said that all mystics are specially distinguished in this regard; (c) all mystics, however, *in all probability*, have much

aesthetic activity, although their conscious attitude to its importance varies considerably, for they are not necessarily philosophers or psychologists ; (d) while it cannot be claimed that the richness of aesthetic activity in a mystic is in any way strictly proportioned to his excellence in mystical experience, it would seem to be likely that some degree of imaginative aptitude is a *sine qua non* for such excellence ; and (e) it appears to be highly probable that the significance of the rejection of imagery depends in some considerable degree upon the significance of what is rejected.

### § 62. *Aesthesis, Empathy, and Mystical Union*

Now we come to the crux of our main argument.

Let us forget, for the moment, the question of aesthesis as an element in the attainment of mystical union, and become quite clear, as far as it is possible to do so without being a mystic, what the mystical union is in itself. In spite of the mystics' use of phrases such as " knowing in love " and " mystical knowledge ", we believe, from our reading of their literature, that the mystical union is not in itself knowledge, at least not in our Crocean sense of the term, but is what, as Croceans, we call *practical* activity. This is borne out by the strong emphasis that they all place upon the activity of the will ; by their insistence on the rejection of imagery, together with the certain fact that whatever mystical experience may be, it is not discursive, logical thought ; and, above all, by the analogy which, when pressed, they will, though reluctantly, allow, between mystical union and *φιλία* or the highest human love. We all know, surely, what *φιλία* is like. As we have seen, it goes beyond anything that we can call knowledge. We have called it an empathetic activity of the will.

There are, in a sense, several " kinds " of empathy, although, fundamentally, empathetic activity is one, as aesthetic activity is one. We have seen that we may even speak, loosely, of an " aut-empathy ", although, ordinarily, we mean by *Einfühlung* the application of the practical activity of one mind to the practical activity of another mind, in such a way that they seem to coincide or become " as one ", so causing the peculiar delight of the em-

pathetic experience. It seems to be possible, however, for one mind genuinely to delight in the mind of another person without the response of the other : true love is not always reciprocated. It is true that if I profess to love a person whom I have never seen, such as Giotto or Saint Teresa, I may be very properly suspected of being in love with myself, as projected by myself into these personalities ; but, on the other hand, if I have studied their works very deeply, it is quite possible for me genuinely to delight, empathetically, in their minds. I certainly may well delight in the mind of a person who is quite irresponsible to my delight. One mind may receive the attention of another, it seems, quite passively. Nor is it always the greater mind that " holds " the attention of the lesser, although perhaps it is usually so : a saint may love a rogue, seeing in his mind more than his roguery, without even the rogue's common gratitude. But the great joy of *φιλία* is in its reciprocity. Here there is true empathy in the fullest sense : one mind does not merely " hold " or passively receive the delight of another in it, but is active as is the other within at least a certain " area ", and there the two activities perfectly coincide. Now, in the case of the mystical union, considered as empathetic experience, it is little wonder that the mystics hesitate to allow that it may be considered to be analogous to human friendship, however exalted. For not only is the empathetic activity of the mystic's mind evidently much greater, intensively and extensively, but, which is far more important, the " other mind " is the Mind of God, infinite in love and power, *Actus Purus*. Moreover, the mystic finds that before he knew or loved God, God had been active in his mind.<sup>1</sup> Now, in the serene repose that is also, by a paradox, intense activity, he responds empathetically while *patitur divina*. The limitations of the analogy between mystical union and human friendship are obvious ; but we have seen how limited are all analogies between the divine and the human.<sup>2</sup>

We have no doubt that the empathetic activity we enjoy in human friendship, has, like all practical activity, an aesthetic ground.<sup>3</sup> Intuition/expression of impressions available to me as the result

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 John, iv, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, §§ 49-50, p. 132 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g. supra*, § 37, esp. p. 93.

of my friend's intuition/expression *may* lead me to have empathetic activity in his mind, although, of course, it does not necessarily do so, and my intuition/expression would be none the worse, and certainly none the less aesthetic, for that. It may be that there is a sort of renunciation of imagery even when I will myself into empathetic union with my friend. But if there is any such renunciation, it is, it would seem, only partial, in that I must keep my aesthetic experience as a background accompaniment. This means little more, if any more, than obedience to the general philosophical principle we developed<sup>1</sup> that each of the four grades of mental activity must be kept pure. Even in discursive thought and ratiocination we have to keep our imaginative groundwork in the background, as we reason. There it is less vivid, less in relief, but still at call, and still ready to come forth in vigour when we require it. It is to be expected that in practical activity, and especially in that practical activity we call empathy, the aesthetic background should be still further removed from the limelight of our experience. But the bond between our empathetic activity and the aesthetic background, the mooring to which it is necessarily secured, is just as unbreakable.

Mystical union, however, being empathetic activity of the mystic's mind in the Mind of God, responding to the divine activity in the mind of the mystic, is a unique case. The mystic is not dealing with another finite mind, and attempting to have empathetic coincidence over as large an "area" as possible between the two minds. He is confronted by that Mind which completely envelops his, and penetrates its very core. That Mind is divinely active in his mind, and he cannot in any wise affect the course of the divine activity, as might be the case if he were dealing with another finite mind with which empathetic activity was in prospect. He can be active only by yielding as completely as possible to the activity of God, and it is abundantly evident that in order to do this he must sever, as far as is humanly possible, the bond that normally binds empathetic activity with the aesthesis that is in the background. It is open to doubt, of course, how far, psychologically, it is possible really to *sever* the bond ; but then it is equally open

<sup>1</sup> In Chapter Four.

to doubt how far, theologically, it is possible to enjoy the Vision of God on earth, even in mystical experience.<sup>1</sup> But at any rate, the bond between the empathetic act of the will and its aesthetic background must evidently be severed far more completely than is the case in any circumstance on earth other than mystical union with God ; for we have seen how crucially important is the renunciation of imagery as a prelude to it.

Now, although mystical experience is unique, and the mystic's mind must be supernaturally raised by God to enjoy it, it is still a human, finite mind. By being raised by God, it does not become God. Otherwise, the *hilo de amor* would be an artificial invention of John of the Cross, which, according to all Catholic testimony, it certainly is not. Would it be tenable, then, to suppose, as is conceivable, that in the unique case of mystical experience the empathetic union is quite independent of its antecedent aesthesis ? Does the significance of the great mystical rejection of imagery not depend in the least on what is rejected ? and could a mystic attain his experience with little or no imaginative endowment ?

We think such a view is not tenable on the philosophical premisses we developed in the first part of our work. Indeed, our view is that, if these premisses are accepted, it would be in no inconsiderable degree repugnant to the spirit of Catholic theology to go on to suppose so radical a change in the essential nature of the finite, human mind that, by being raised supernaturally to the enjoyment of mystical union with God, it should cease to be itself at all. For this, assuredly, is what would have to happen, on our philosophical premisses, if it were to have, even at the divine behest, an experience so " wholly other " that even the aesthetic groundwork it had to renounce became wholly irrelevant to the situation.

We maintain that aesthetic activity is the groundwork of *all* the experience a finite, human mind can have. We recognize not only that mystical experience is not in the least like aesthesis, but that, being at best comparable, by analogy, only to the empathetic activity of the highest human love we know, it is unique even as such, and requires not merely the subordination, or " dimming-out " of imagery, but, rather, for a supernatural aim, the

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 57, p. 162.



temporary suspension of imagery by mystical rejection. But let us be reminded what the images are that are rejected in the *properly mystical* rejection. Are they, from a Catholic point of view, irrelevant to divine being? For they are not the *aestheta* which are, in some sense, "rejected" in the philosophical contemplation of a meta-physical object. They are not rivers and lakes and lilies, but the specially intuited aesthetic symbols of God — symbols intuited from the propositions of theological truth put back into the crucible. If God does not reveal himself even as an object of faith to irrational creatures, as Catholic theology admits that he does not do, are we to suppose that he nevertheless reveals himself, not in faith, but by the "sight" of mystical experience, to a mind in such a situation that its own imaginative aptitude and the significance of the imagery it has renounced are completely blotted out and quite irrelevant?

In our last section<sup>1</sup> we granted that we could not claim that aesthetic activity and mystical experience were in any way strictly proportioned to each other. Nor should we say that our capacity for responding in faith to revelation was proportioned to our prowess in discursive thought or logical reflection. We say only that as some logical coherence is necessary and indispensable for receiving revelation in faith, so some imaginative aptitude is necessary and indispensable for entering upon mystical experience. Moreover, we are not prepared to believe that the mystic is required to reject imagery that has no bearing upon the mystical union that is impending, as if the point of the rejection consisted merely in its value as a dissociated exercise or discipline of the will. We have seen that there is no substitute for the rejection of a specific kind of imagery; but if the imagery were quite irrelevant to the mystical situation, it might be that some other discipline, equally exacting, could serve the mystic's purpose; and this would be contrary to the unanimous finding of the mystics themselves.

We hold, therefore, that mystical experience, viewed as a whole, and distinguished from the act of mystical union which we interpret as a super-empathetic activity, has within itself an aesthetic "moment", peculiarly significant to the experience.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 61, p. 187.

As imagery is necessary to discursive thought, but, being a nuisance to the thinker, must be shelved as he proceeds with his intellectual reflection, so a particular kind of imagery is necessary to the unique experience of the mystic, but, being a very much greater nuisance to him, must be put, as far as is humanly possible, completely out of sight as he proceeds towards the *passio divinorum* in that super-empathetic state to which God has graciously admitted him.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE FUNCTION OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN RELIGION

### § 63. *The Goal of Religion*

WE may be quite clear on one point. However we interpret the term "religion", the ultimate goal of religion must in fact always be some kind of vital union with divine being. The manner of this union and the extent to which the Beatific Vision may be foretasted in our present state are questions susceptible of considerable divergence of view. We should regard as thoroughly unsatisfactory, however, any standpoint from which true union was conceived as possible otherwise than in an I-Thou relationship.

Moreover, although *Deum nemo vidit unquam*, perhaps not many theological doctrines would receive such wide acceptance today throughout Christendom as that it is the chief end of man to enjoy God.<sup>1</sup> We have seen that the Catholic mystics have upheld this cardinal doctrine with emphasis. These mystics, although singularly inflamed by the desire to consummate this union as soon and as fully as possible, and — we must suppose — conspicuously endowed with a capacity for doing so, do not differ essentially from other earnest worshippers of God, either in the supreme goal of their activities or in the mode of their approach to it. It is, however, also of paramount importance to observe that this enjoyment of God is not to be considered as merely an individual concern. It is not a disconnected series of I-Thou relationships, but one that is necessarily grounded in the Church.

That there is an immense disparity between our will and the will of God is not only a fundamental tenet of the Christian religion, but a necessary presupposition of the religious consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> The answer to the first question in the Scottish Catechism is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever".

To be able to say with increasing sincerity, *fiat voluntas tua*, would be generally acknowledged to be the essential basis of the true life of prayer. If it were otherwise, the *raison d'être* of religion would have been destroyed by the achievement of its goal. Our wills are not in alignment with the will of God; and the measure of the distortion is, according to Catholic theology, quite stupendous.<sup>1</sup> It is also a characteristically Christian utterance that "we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves".<sup>2</sup> We therefore posit the divine initiative in an I-Thou relationship within the Church. The Catholic mystic claims an experience of this love much more intimate and first-hand than that claimed by the larger body of believers, who, at least ordinarily, experience it only analogically, even if by the *analogia fidei*.

The sufferings and ecstasies in the whole ambit of experience directed towards mystical union appear to arise from the attempt made to adjust the mystic's will to the will of God. As certain degrees of adjustment are achieved, a "contact" is made between God and the mystic. This "contact" is, of course, non-sensory. It is the "contact" of mind; and it takes place, as the mystics say, at the "apex of the mind".<sup>3</sup> This experience of the "contact" of minds is known to us in everyday life. We have it in friendship, for example, and in all human relationships in which, as we say, "personal contact" affords us an experience for which there is no substitute. Love and friendship cannot be measured in terms of any other, for example, aesthetic, experience. As we have seen from our study of some typical mystics, what the mystics claim is an experience of God in a manner that has its analogy in the manner of our experience of other finite minds in the highest human love and friendship. The experience that one finite mind can have of another is plainly a very different one from that which a finite mind may be conceived to have of the mind of God, in mystical union; but the kind of activity in which a finite

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, we insist that it *is* a distortion, against certain continental theologians who, in the Calvinist manner, teach the complete effacement of the *Imago Dei* in man.

<sup>2</sup> Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent (from the Gregorian Sacramentary).

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, § 68, pp. 217 ff.

mind engages in either case is fundamentally of a similar character. One mind has joy in another by empathy, and seems to "fit into" the other mind and be submerged in it. Nevertheless, so far from there being a fusion or disintegration of consciousness by this submersion, the mind enjoying the empathetic experience finds itself more fully integrated than before, as one finds oneself most at ease when most efficient.

In our ordinary experience of friendship, only a small part of our mind, as it were, is engaged in this activity. Even in the rarest and most exalted kinds of human love and friendship, where the "contact" takes place over a large field, and where it seems as if very complex machinery is engaged, and fitted into other machinery equally complex and delicate, there is still a great part of both minds inevitably outside the "area" of contact. In mystical union with God, on the other hand, the situation is very different. Here we are confronted by him who grips our mind at every point. In the nature of the case, our mind can never be active outside him in the way it can be active outside the finite mind of a human friend. *Quis mensus est pugillo aquas, et caelos palmo ponderavit?*<sup>1</sup> But in the mystic way, our maladjustment to his will is gradually giving place to better adjustment. The "sweet pains" suffered by the mystics at certain stages of their mystical development are therefore to be interpreted as the *malaise* to be expected in connection with the adjustment of their activity to that of God. The travail is indeed terrible; but it has an inexpressible sweetness, because, like the travail of childbirth, it is not pain *simpliciter*, but the pain by which self-fulfilment is attained.

That which puts this readjustment of our will and all the empathetic activity connected with it into operation is God's love, which moves the universe.<sup>2</sup> To this love, by reason of a capacity that it gives us, we are capable of responding; but the manifestation of the response, from the point of view of an observer of the mystics, for instance, must necessarily assume many different forms; and while mystical experience such as we have studied in the preceding chapter seems to be the hall-mark of the highly favoured, its character may be determined to some considerable extent by the character

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xl, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, c. 33, *fin.*

and psychological make-up of the individual enjoying the experience. One writer puts the case as follows :

Let us suppose the same high degree of metabiological union with God mediated through the charity whereby we participate in His own self-love, granted respectively to two souls A and B. A is an opaque soul, B a transparent soul. In the case of B, that union may be perceptible as a concomitant intuition of the Divine Action, as mystical or infused contemplation, whereas in the case of A it is wholly imperceptible, and he possesses no further intuition of God than that obscure sense of a passive presence which, as Père Picard points out, is common to all souls in a state of grace. Moreover if A is a soul of a very opaque, B a soul of a very transparent type, A may possess the union of consummate charity, true sanctity without any intuition of that union ; B, on the other hand, with a low degree of union, may enjoy an intuition of the Divine Action within his soul. . . . Among the circumstances which condition the presence or otherwise of a mystical intuition of the Divine Union are environment and previous knowledge of mystical literature. A man whose outlook has been formed by mystical studies is *caeteris paribus* more likely to become aware of the Divine Operation within his soul than one who knows nothing of mystical theology.<sup>1</sup>

From this we may suppose that (a) the capacity for mystical experience is a gift of God, like an ear for music,<sup>2</sup> and (b) by practice this gift, like that of music, may be cultivated and developed. We are a little inclined to suspect an artificiality in the distinction between "opaque" and "transparent" souls ; but it may be that some such distinction in psychological type has significance here. In any case, however, if we use the term "union" as Mr. Watkin does, we must be careful to distinguish between true mystical union and the "imperceived union" to which he refers. Surely the latter is simply divine inhabitation by way of grace. If so, it is a commonplace to say that it is not measured by our mystical apprehension of it. But in the *mystical* relationship, such subjective factors are of scant importance. In the sense in which this author here uses the term "union", it is no doubt right to say that B, with a low degree of it, may enjoy an intuition of the action of God, while

<sup>1</sup> E. I. Watkin, *A Philosophy of Form* (1938), part 2, c. 5, pp. 421-422.

<sup>2</sup> This parallel is, in fact, suggested by Mr. Watkin, in a footnote (*op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*).

A, with a high degree of it, may not. But in our sense of the term, we must say that we cannot possibly have mystical union without knowing that it is God with whom we have it, and in whom we delight. That we should have it without knowing it to be with what the theological text-books call God, which is, of course, possible, is not, from our point of view, relevant or important. I may fully enjoy the contemplation of a certain rose without knowing that it is called *rosa damascena* : what I cannot do is to enjoy it without knowing that I do. That the joy is greater than the knowledge of it, we very readily admit ; but still we cannot love a rose without knowing that we love it ; nor can we so unconsciously love God.

In mystical love, our will is fully engaged. The mystics sometimes speak of our "understanding" and "memory" as well as our "will" being extinguished in the mystical act, when they mean simply that our will must be fully engaged, fully concentrated on God, and that in order to achieve this we have to discipline every mode of our activity. Modern psychology has abundantly demonstrated that our wills are not nearly as active as we are prone to believe them to be. The mystics assure us, no doubt with good reason, that much of the effort required in attaining the mystic union consists simply in putting ourselves at the disposal of the divine activity. Piny, a French mystic, says that perfection *ne s'acquiert point tant en faisant comme en laissant faire*. Quietism so misinterprets this fact as to make it the key to the whole process, while in fact it is not more than an integral part of it. But in *laissant faire* there may be, and in the mystical situation certainly is, a greater effort of the will than there is in any other activity in which we ever engage. Nor can we over-stress the fact that the mystic yields himself to God by an act of the will only in order that he may be able to respond by positive activity according to the impact of God upon him in mystical union. The mystic frequently writes, it is true, as if he simply laid himself down to let God live in him. So Saint Paul writes that it is not he but Christ that lives in him.<sup>1</sup> But this is only so that he may live, in the recurrent Pauline phrase,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii, 20.

"in Christ".<sup>1</sup> Again and again he must exert himself to yield to God, so that he may live again in God, by empathy, and so move towards the fulfilment of his goal, participating by foretaste in the Beatific Vision.<sup>2</sup>

§ 64. *The "Terminus a Quo" and the "Terminus ad Quem"*

No sooner has one embarked on a discussion such as the preceding than the extremely rarefied atmosphere in which we are forced to move must become apparent. We are obliged to deal in spatial metaphors, such as "in Christ" and "the apex of the mind". However great our vigilance, this would soon involve us in an intellectual muddle. That this is so need not surprise us if we recognize that here we are in a realm "above" knowledge, that is, in the realm of will. And when, in fact, the mystic engages in such activities of the will in love, he will very quickly find that they must be constantly supported by their proper ground of knowledge, and that, as soon as this ground is removed or even shaken, he will founder. The ladder by which he makes his ascent is not one the rungs of which may be clipped off from below as he ascends: upon its secure foundation in that which is the ground of all his activity, all his activity depends. This ground we have seen to be the aesthetic fact, that basic activity that emerges when we make our first intuition/expression of reality. If this is not genuine, and Croce has taught us to recognize that it is more rarely genuine than we tend to believe, it may taint the whole of our experience at higher levels. Its genuineness does not, of course, ensure the genuineness of the higher levels of experience; but it is an indispensable pre-condition. The accuracy of a gun-sight does not ensure a correct trajectory; but if it is wrong, the trajectory

<sup>1</sup> Professor Deissmann's earliest published work, *Die neutestamentliche Formel "in Christo Jesu"*, suggested that this phrase be understood "locally", on the analogy underlying phrases such as ἐν πνεύματι and ἐν τῷ θεῷ; but the interchangeability of the ideas "Christ in me" and "I in Christ" makes it clear that it is simply a question of the interaction of two wills: it is by empathy that the mystic is ἐν Χριστῷ.

<sup>2</sup> The Beatific Vision is, in a sense, *beyond* religion. We consider it later (*infra*, § 69, p. 221 ff.).



will be wrong in any case, and the projectile will miss the mark.

As we regard union with God as the *terminus ad quem* of all experience, so we look upon aesthetic experience as its *terminus a quo*. They are, indeed, so remote as to be generally incomparable; and yet their very remoteness is, we maintain, the source of the peculiarly significant relationship that lies between them. It is the existence of such a relationship that gives meaning to the main problem that we have set ourselves in the present work. It may be illustrated in several ways, by reference to *factors* in aesthetic experience and mystical experience respectively. Let us consider a typical case :

We have seen how very important a factor in mystical experience is that which we have called the "true" rejection of imagery. And yet it is only a factor. One might conceivably claim to express the whole fact of mystical union by some phrase such as *pacti divina* or "empathetic activity in the divine mind"; but for this phrase, "rejection of imagery", we certainly can make no such claim. Now, there is in aesthetics a technical term to which we have already referred,<sup>1</sup> namely, the Antinomy of Distance. No aesthetician would claim that this stood for the whole of the aesthetic fact, in the sense that Croce claims that terms such as "expression" and "intuition" and "imagination" stand for it.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, it is, as Mr. Edward Bullough, the inventor of the term, has explicitly called it, only a factor in aesthetic experience. It stands for a process as indispensable to aesthetic experience, however, as is the rejection of imagery to mystical experience.

We have connected Mr. Bullough's doctrine of "distance" with Croce's "persisting in the intuitive attitude".<sup>3</sup> It is

produced in the first instance by putting the phenomenon, so to speak, out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends — in short, by looking at it "objectively", as it has often been called; by permitting only such reactions on our part as emphasise the "objective" features of the experience, and by interpreting even our "subjective" affections not as modes of *our* being, but rather as characteristics of the phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 11, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 32, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, § 11, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *B.J. of Psychology*, vol. 5, as cited *supra*, § 11, p. 42, n.

This can only mean to us what we have called "keeping our aesthetic activity pure".<sup>1</sup> If we will have aesthetic activity, we must stand aloof from all other activity as best we can. Neither must we think logically, saying, "this picture is (or is not) astronomically (or zoologically) exact"; nor must we associate the aesthetic situation with an "economic" activity, saying, for instance, "this scherzo is pleasant and therefore good music"; nor yet must we connect it with morality, saying, "this is a bad statue, for it will tend to produce sadism in those persons who contemplate it". It is, however, natural for an intelligent and moral being to react in such ways. To attain to pure aesthetic experience, by "persisting in the intuitive attitude", we have to make a considerable effort. By cutting off all these other modes of activity we liberate ourselves for this pure aesthetic experience. We must not only "get back" to the aesthetic level: we must rigorously "dim out" or hold off all the *higher* modes of activity, keeping them in the background so as to focus the limelight on the *lowest* level of experience, the aesthetic. This is inevitably a precarious situation. Aesthetic experience is, as has been said, "poised as on a knife's edge".<sup>2</sup> We have to hold off even the peculiar pleasure which, to say the least, tends to accompany aesthetic activity. Immediately we achieve our purpose, however, we allow these other modes of experience to return to the limelight; and it is likely that foremost in their train will be that "economic" experience, the pleasure accompanying aesthesis. Till then we must deny ourselves all this, getting down to our "business", which is the aesthetic mode of knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 41, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 11, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> The hostility of the world towards genuine mysticism is paralleled by its equally notorious hostility not only to genuine art but to pure science. Dr. Thouless hints at this when he recalls (*Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Cambridge, 1936, p. 214) Suso's temptation to forego mysticism and lead a "respectable" Christian life like any convert from drink to decency. Dr. Thouless observes how this "subtle and dangerous" temptation of the mystic is exactly paralleled in the scientific research worker, who is peculiarly tempted to abandon his investigations for work more "socially valuable". The world tends to be antipathetic to any marked persistence in any mode of activity; and yet artist and mystic and scientist all know that to yield to the common temptation confronting them would be to sell their souls. In resisting the pressure

In practice, which, among this formidable array, is likely to be our chief enemy? It can hardly be said to be intellectual reflection. It is fairly easy, in spite of the habitual muddling of aesthesis and logic in "ordinary perception",<sup>1</sup> for an artistic person to stop thinking *about* art, and "just look". This, at the level of knowledge, is what is done at the level of the will by a "man of action" who, setting aside morality, simply wills, that is, wills "economically". What is much more difficult is to be quite will-less, even momentarily, while trying to persist in a fundamental mode of knowledge. In attaining to the lowest level and ultimate groundwork of experience in its purity, the major peril seems to lie, therefore, in the will, which is the higher part of experience.

Let us now turn to the other pole of our comparison. We have seen how, in mystical experience, it is essential that the mystic should have "rejected imagery". We have also distinguished the properly mystical rejection, which is unique, from the less exalted, but nevertheless necessary, rejection of imagery that is required of the ordinary devout churchman, and as a prelude to the "true" mystical rejection.<sup>2</sup> This less exalted, more "ordinary" rejection seems to us to be immediately comparable, as a factor in mystical experience, to "distancing" as a factor in aesthesis. But here the process is, as it were, in reverse. Here we "dim out" not *higher* modes or levels of activity, but *lower* ones, especially the *lowest*, aesthesis. We have seen that even the philosopher or scientist, for example, must do this in "dimming out" the images which are the ground of abstract thinking, but which are nevertheless a nuisance to the thinker.<sup>3</sup> But our devout churchman or mystical aspirant does this "dimming out" at a further remove.<sup>4</sup>

of the world that would adulterate his proper activity, the scientist suffers with artist and mystic, because all have in common the task of persisting in a particularly genuine attitude; but artist and mystic have a special affinity in that their attention is focussed on the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of experience respectively. The mystic has, no doubt, the largest measure of hostility from the world, in that his forces have to be the most extensively deployed.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 41, p. 103 ff.    <sup>2</sup> *Supra*, § 61, 184.    <sup>3</sup> *Supra*, § 61, 184 f.

<sup>4</sup> It may be objected that so also does every man of affairs. To this we reply that (a) much such "economic" activity is in fact confused by the failure fully to isolate the activity of will from the ground of knowledge, and/or is tainted by defects in the ground of knowledge itself, and (b) in any case, to the extent that

Now, what we have called the "true" mystical rejection of imagery is unique in that the *aestheta*, in this case themselves unique, are not merely "dimmed out" or pushed into the background, but, as far as is in any circumstances humanly possible, completely, if momentarily, set aside. It is only in this way that the mystic can persist in *his* attitude, which is unique indeed. In aesthetic experience we know of no counterpart to *this* process, in which all higher modes of experience are completely cut off. Nor can there be such a counterpart, as far as we can imagine, because of the essential difference in the nature and ends of the two kinds of experience. In one case we are at the *terminus a quo* of all experience : in the other we are as nearly at the *terminus ad quem* as it is possible in this life to be. But even this "true" rejection of imagery, as an indispensable factor in mystical experience, has this in common with "distancing" as an indispensable factor in aesthetic experience : it is a *setting apart* of experience in one mode from all other modes of experience. The immense difference, that in the one case the dichotomy must be greater, is as we should expect in view of the gulf between the *terminus a quo* of experience and its *terminus ad quem*. No gulf could be wider. And yet we find some community in the factors that help us to attain to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that, in spite of the mystics' insistence on the non-sensory character of their experience, the bond between aesthetic experience and theirs should appear so obvious. It should surprise us no more, for example, than does T. S. Eliot when he writes :

O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less,  
The eastern light our spires touch at morning,  
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,  
The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,  
Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,  
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.  
O Light Invisible, we worship Thee !

religion is the most complex, intricate and profound activity in which one can engage, our devout churchman or mystical aspirant has to work on a scale so vast that his difficulty is not really comparable to even a "pure" act of the will in "secular" pursuits. He is required to "persist" in an attitude of loving God with a pure heart, an end the vastness of which makes much greater demands in the process we envisage than do the ends to which the will of "men of affairs", as such, is ever directed.

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,  
 The light of altar and of sanctuary ;  
 Small lights of those who meditate at midnight  
 And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows  
 And light reflected from the polished stone,  
 The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.  
 Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward  
 And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.  
 We see the light but see not whence it comes,  
 O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee !

And we must extinguish the candle, put out the light and relight it ;  
 Forever must quench, forever relight the flame.  
 Therefore we thank Thee for our little light, that is dappled with  
 shadow.

We thank Thee who hast moved us to building, to finding, to forming  
 at the ends of our fingers and beams of our eyes.  
 And when we have built an altar to the Invisible Light, we may set  
 thereon the little lights for which our bodily vision is made.  
 And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light.  
 O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory !<sup>1</sup>

From the little lights, the *terminus a quo* of our experience, we ascend Carmel to the Light Invisible, the *terminus ad quem* ; but, in the very apprehension of that Light, we set before us, on the altar we raise to it, "the little lights for which our bodily vision is made". But the little lights of aesthetic experience are not really comparable at all to the Light Invisible of mystical union. From one point of view their relationship is distinguished by the remoteness of the one from the other. But from another standpoint, which we think is a more useful one, it is this very remoteness that properly suggests the continual metaphors of literature which poetically compare them. Poetry speaks of the little lights and the Great Light, of the beautiful and the Beauty of God. While we know that from one point of view the figure is as strained as it can be, from another it is peculiarly apposite. On the one hand is the root of our experience, and on the other its full flower. But this polarity cannot be appreciated until the flower is at least in bud — until we can say, with Joseph Mary Plunkett,

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Rock*.

I see His blood upon the rose  
 And in the stars the glory of His eyes,  
 His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
 His tears fall from the skies.

I see His face in every flower ;  
 The thunder and the singing of the birds  
 Are but His voice — and carved by His power  
 Rocks are His written words.

All pathways by His feet are worn,  
 His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,  
 His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
 His cross is every tree.<sup>1</sup>

### § 65. *Morality in Religion*

A short discussion on the place of ethics in religion is necessary to indicate how much and how little we may claim as the function of aesthetic experience in religion.

The theistic argument from moral values to the idea of God is familiar to every modern student of theology.<sup>2</sup> Since Kant's assertion of the primacy of the practical reason in dealing with the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality, the development of this type of approach has been very considerable. Its popularity has been due in large measure, no doubt, to a wide acceptance of a view expressed by Lotze in the last section of the last book he wrote, that "the true beginning of metaphysics lies in ethics". This is not a dictum that would so widely commend itself today ; but the approach to religion from moral values has certainly attained a very respectable place. On the other hand, of all the varieties of arguments of this kind that have been expounded, there have been relatively few that may be called arguments from the beautiful to the idea of God. The reason for this has already been made obvious, we hope, in the analysis of our own problem. The aesthetic fact stands in such a fundamental place in experience that, as an *apologia* for theism, an argument from it to God fails through

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Poems*, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Professor W. R. Sorley's *Moral Values and the Idea of God* is a good example of a sustained argument of this kind.

question-begging. Nevertheless, all good theology has always been aware of the relevance of the aesthetic fact to religion; and if much theology has been insufficiently aware of it, it is because not until comparatively recently has the precise character of the aesthetic fact been understood. The question has also been sometimes obscured by treatises on "art and religion", which, as we shall presently see, is an even more complex problem. Certainly it is one that could not have been solved in the pre-Crocean state of aesthetic science.

Morality has been used with success, then, in one type of theistic argument. But although it has certain features in common with religion, such as their social origin, not only are the two very different indeed, but their evolution may be shown to consist of distinct, though certainly not disconnected, processes. From the point of view of "mere" morality, much of the emphasis of religion upon our being miserable sinners is oddly pathetic, while "pardon, absolution, and remission" of our sins is distinctly immoral. Indeed, unless we are impressed by the necessity of union with God, a necessity which demonstrates both our sinfulness and the possibility of forgiveness, it would be much more moral to stop wailing about our sin and simply decide to conduct ourselves better in the future; for, as Sir Oliver Lodge observed, "the higher man of today is not worrying about his sins at all".<sup>1</sup> But, from the religious standpoint, it is really blasphemy to decide to behave better in future without reference to God; for we must know that without him we can do nothing.

Nevertheless, the close connection between religion and morality is too obvious to need much exposition. Having repudiated Otto's theory of a religious consciousness or mode of activity *sui generis*, neither aesthetic nor ethical, nor yet logical nor "practical",<sup>2</sup> we certainly regard the connection between morality and religion as a close one. But, plainly, it is not close enough for one to be identified with the other. Indeed, in some respects the two appear

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, April 1904, p. 466. In the paragraph following this remark, Sir Oliver, after denying the existence of "original sin" ("no-one but a monk could have invented it"), goes on to say that "whatever it be, it is not a business for which we are responsible".

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* in Croce's sense — the third form of mind (*economia*).

to be opposed ; but, strictly, religion can never be *opposed* to true morality, which is the highest abstraction in experience. The goal of religion is, as we have seen, an act of the will — the act of union with God. This is clearly not an act of the indiscriminating, amoral will, although it is an act in which the will is so identified with and sustained by the divine will as to be good to a degree beyond the ordinary discourse of ethics, which views morality as involving a struggle. If we regard morality as the highest and last mode of activity, the cope-stone of our experience, we must suppose it to be subject in fact to defects greater than those of its antecedent grounds. That is to say, while even with the aesthetic intuition of a Giotto, the logical reflection of an Aristotle, and the practical will of a Napoleon, our moral activity might still be limited, it cannot possibly be otherwise than limited, if we have no antecedent activities of such distinction. The general defects of our practical will, for instance, limit it ; but when the lowest ground of our experience, the aesthetic, is narrow, our moral life, however strenuous, will be thin indeed. The narrowness of the morality of narrow-minded people, that is, of people whose general experience is very limited, is even more conspicuous than any of their other limitations. Although a perennial source of inspiration to many playwrights and of entertainment to their audiences, it is usually less entertaining to those who have to cope with it in practical life ; and it is also an important factor in alienating many people from the religion with which it claims to be associated. Nevertheless, all this is quite compatible with Plato's doctrine of the identification of the Good and the Real. It is only that, even at the best, morality, in our everyday experience, cannot be otherwise than a relatively narrow mode of grasping reality, while at the worst it can be a more ridiculous caricature of goodness than ever art can be of beauty. "The religious consciousness", writes Professor Sorley, ". . . asks not merely for the conservation of the values that have already been created, but also for a progressive increase of the values which are worth conserving : even if this increase and conservation should require a new heaven and a new earth."<sup>1</sup>

As a composite activity, seeking union with the ultimate goal

<sup>1</sup> W. R. Sorley, *op. cit.* p. 179.



of all experience, religion runs the whole gamut of experience. According to Christianity, this composite activity cannot be initiated otherwise than by God, in what theology calls revelation. If Christianity's claims be true, the whole of experience is transformed, and the apprehension of reality, in every mode of experience, enhanced. But there is no reason to suppose that the relation of the modes of experience to one another is changed. Moral activity is still the highest abstraction. When, as a result of the divine initiative and our sufficient response, our experience is enriched, and our grasp of reality made more thorough, our moral activity may be to some extent recast so as to become more and more simply our "economic" activity. We have then become more capable of attaining a degree of empathetic union with God that plainly prefigures the Beatific Vision, in which, as we shall see,<sup>1</sup> moral activity, like logical reflection, becomes redundant. But any such enriched "economic" activity that we enjoy must be continually enriched, in our present state, from the moral abstraction; and it is certainly still grounded, in the last resort, in aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience must therefore have been at least correspondingly enriched before the question of the enrichment of our will may arise at all.

### § 66. *Art in Religion*

Some essays on aesthetics have been entitled "What is Art?" ; some "What is Beauty?" For Croce, art, beauty, intuition, expression are synonymous terms. When Croce speaks of art, he means the aesthetic fact. The technique by which the intuition/expression is deposited in a physical symbol for practical convenience is quite unimportant for him; and the result may be called "beautiful" or "a work of art" only by speaking elliptically. He might compare it with the technique of printing or bookbinding, which, by making a philosophical library accessible to us, and perhaps attractive, helps to stimulate the reflective activity. But the Sistine Madonna is no more art than my copy of Descartes is logical reflection.

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, § 69, p. 224 f.

While sympathizing with the aim for which Croce is here striving, we think that he unnecessarily tries to crush an inevitable distinction between the aesthetic fact and the practical activity we call art. In isolating the aesthetic fact, Croce made it unnecessary separately to answer many of the questions that have been asked about art ; but, while art, as generally understood, is a very different activity from what pre-Crocean aesthetics said it was, we may not discard the problem of art simply by identifying art with aesthetic experience. Although, as pre-Crocean analyses had never properly exhibited, the essential *character* of art is the internal aesthetic activity that Croce so carefully isolates, it does not follow that art is aesthetic activity *simpliciter*. Croce would probably say that here we engage in a verbal quibble ; but we should reply that the question is so important that it is necessary to make a verbal quibble upon it impossible.

Jacques Maritain rightly upholds the doctrine of the schools that art is a practical activity. It is not merely grounded, as is all practical activity, in the aesthetic fact : it has as its sole *raison d'être* the stimulation of the theoretic activity of aesthetic experience. Art is not, like aesthetic experience, simply knowledge. Croce would admit that there are such composite activities as we have in mind, aiming at the presentation of reality not as an abstract moment of experience, but as streams in the full course of experience. Among such forms we should put what we call art, distinguishing it from the aesthetic moment itself, although without this moment it would not have any character at all.

Art, in this non-Crocean sense, has not only played a large part in all religion, and in most religions a very large part, but has been inspired by it in a conspicuous degree. Perhaps it has never been wholly unsuspected, apart from the iconoclastic outbursts and puritan fanaticisms that many religions have occasionally suffered ; for in asserting itself in its own right, as it is always bound to do, it is always capable of irreligion. This is particularly true when an ecclesiastical patron attempts to enlist an art of alien origin by hiring the alien artist. In such a case the artist can hardly be expected not to turn as readily as not to the service of idolatry or magic. That art should serve religion is not at all incompatible with its

independence : on the contrary, it cannot help serving religion when an artist who is a religious man has had the genuine aesthetic experience without which art cannot exist. Likewise, it cannot help *not* serving religion when an artist who is *not* a religious man has had that same genuine aesthetic experience. "The memorial of Queen Victoria in London", writes Eric Gill, "is typical of the sort of thing to which irreligion has brought us. Compare the sculptures on that monument with the sculptures of Chartres Cathedral, for example, or with the Egyptian idols in the British Museum."<sup>1</sup>

Aesthetic experience need not and frequently does not produce a physical symbol. When it does so, however, it seems somehow to cast a spell over the very site of the symbol, long after the symbol has been destroyed :

Wherever beauty has been quick in clay  
Some effluence of it lives, a spirit dwells.<sup>2</sup>

And one must say that at least it tends to produce such a symbol, especially where it arises in a consciousness conspicuously enjoying composite activities, such as religion. It is the nature of the religious consciousness, particularly, to communicate every mode of experience. In religion, we have come to speak of art as a necessity. The peculiar aesthetic intuitions that a religious consciousness enjoys may have little significance for many ; but, if the Catholic view of the *Imago Dei* be true, they cannot have no significance for any. We do not speak of art as necessary, however, merely because it is inescapable to the extent that religion involves missionary effort : it is rather that the Church herself must stimulate her own, necessarily religious, intuitions, for the continuance of her own life. Without them, not only is her goal, but every further mode of experience, unattainable. The Church uses art, therefore, not merely as part of her educational equipment, but for her own enrichment, and, indeed, for her own existence. If at some time or in some place she should lack the vigour necessary to gain access to good art, she must use inferior art, such as the art of Saint Sulpice, or its many equivalents. As soon as any moment of experience

<sup>1</sup> *Sculpture*, p. 13 (Saint Dominic's Press, Ditchling, Sussex).

<sup>2</sup> John Masefield, *Sonnets*, 35. In *Collected Poems* (Heinemann, 1923), p. 436.

(for example, the moral) is inhibited, the life of religion suffers, and the process of the attainment of the religious goal is abruptly checked. Because we maintain the aesthetic moment to be the basis from which all other activity is an abstraction, its stimulation is to us a question of the most urgent concern ; for if at this point experience be inhibited, the whole of experience may fall in the supervening aridity. This does not always happen in fact : what sometimes does happen is that the aesthetic experience of the religious consciousness is inhibited, and the activity shifts to another direction, as the life of religion gradually expires.

It is, however, by an elliptical usage that we speak of art as necessary to religion : it is a convenient, but slightly misleading locution. For the life of the Church, art is a practical necessity, because we are so constituted that we require stimulation and succour in aesthetic experience. Theoretically, it is not art in this sense that is necessary. What is necessary is art in the Crocean sense — the aesthetic fact.

One might illustrate this distinction by referring to the common defect of prayer that spiritual directors call “distractions”. When a devout person attends Mass, he strives as far as possible, in recasting his experience in the crucible from which fresh experience is to take off, to extract from reality the *phantasmata* that are to lead him a certain way towards the religious goal. In the course of doing so, he is partly successful, and partly unsuccessful. His failure may be due to failure to have any aesthetic intuition at all, that is, general failure to have the first step in experience ; or it may be due to his having genuine aesthetic intuition, but such as will not carry him far enough on his appointed road. At the *Kyrie*, for instance, he may have a perfectly genuine intuition/expression of a floodlit Bavarian castle where he last heard Beethoven’s *Mass in D* ; and his aesthetic activity may now be thus focussed in a manner other than that which, as a devout assistant at Mass, he desires it to be. If so, he has a “distraction”. On the other hand, it may be that he can use the Bavarian castle as part of the complex of aesthesis upon which he is to build his experience in the direction of the religious goal. Good art, that is, art which is the result of genuine aesthetic experience in a consciousness moving towards

the goal to which our worshipper aspires, is likely to help him, when he recasts his experience after a distraction, to draw out from the hinterland of experience the aesthetic intuition/expression that will provide ground for his flight, that is, ground from which he may take off in the direction in which he desires to go, namely, towards the goal of religion. But art, as such, has, strictly, no value at all : its value lies in the aesthetic experience that it may not only stimulate but, in a sense, direct.

The physical symbol is often called " holy ". What meaning are we to attach to this term ? and what is the relation of " holy things " to art ? Let us hear Professor Collingwood on this subject, in a passage on " holiness " in which he plainly envisages physical objects as invested with it :<sup>1</sup>

Holiness is to religion what beauty is to art. It is the specific form in which truth appears to that type of consciousness. As religion, therefore, is a dialectical development of art, so holiness is a dialectical development of beauty. Now religion is art asserting its object. The object of art is the beautiful, and therefore the holy is the beautiful asserted as real. All the characteristics of God as holy are found to revolve round this centre. The holy is, generically, object of aesthetic contemplation, and as such beautiful ; and this is true of all the objects of religion. Further, holiness, like beauty, polarizes itself into the positively holy (God) and the negatively holy, that which we are forbidden to find holy or worship, the devil and all his works. But specifically, holiness is asserted as real, and therefore God is regarded not as our own invention, not as a fancy or work of art, but as a reality, indeed the only and ultimate reality. Hence that rapture and admiration which we enjoy in the contemplation of a work of art is in the case of God fused with the conviction that we here come face to face with something other than ourselves and our own imaginings, something infinitely real, the ground and source of our own being.

We are not willing to accept a distinction between the holy and the beautiful based on the reality of the former, as opposed to the latter, which is called " our invention ". Professor Collingwood defines religion, " relatively to art ", as the " discovery of

<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis* (O.U.P., 1924), pp. 119-120. Soon afterwards (p. 122) we read that " religion is a structure of sensuous or imaginary elements, like art, and — for that matter — like every other form of consciousness ".

reality".<sup>1</sup> From our point of view, the beautiful is not less real for being, in the strict meaning of the term, invented by us. We invent, in this strict meaning, both the beautiful and the holy. Nevertheless, there is a distinction between physical objects that we call "works of art" and others which we call, no less elliptically, "holy things", such as crucifixes and relics. In primitive religion, an object is "holy" when invested with "mana", often conceived as an active physical property, perhaps like radium. Outside Christianity, "holy" objects are often worshipped as divine; and we call this practice idolatry, because it inhibits the direction of worship to its proper, supra-sensuous goal. And yet, if there be any truth in Masfield's saying that the beautiful remains wherever it "has been quick in clay", then it must be even more plainly true of the holy.<sup>2</sup> Certain objects are universally revered within Christendom as "holy". Who would tread quite without awe so much as the shores of Palestine? One ascends the Scala Santa on one's knees, if only because of the prayers there uttered and the vows there paid. Even the English puritan would have hesitated to use a discarded copy of the Scriptures for lighting his pipe. And yet no toleration of even the lowest *dulia* to such objects may be regarded by any Christian as in the least permissible.

This Christian attitude to images or "holy things" is paralleled by the attitude we are maintaining to physical objects called "works of art". Neither is considered as having value in itself. They are both mere physical symbols: *os habent et non loquentur: oculos habent et non videbunt*.<sup>3</sup> But it is at least no less obvious that we cannot ever identify "works of art" with "holy things". A crucifix is always a "work of art", although perhaps more often than not it is an undistinguished one; and a "work of art" is not even likely to be a "holy thing". The *raison d'être* of a "work of art" is to stimulate the aesthetic experience that has been, so to speak, deposited in it. The *raison d'être* of a "holy thing" is to stimulate experience in a certain *direction*, namely (in the long run) mystical union with God. But this it must do by starting from an aesthetic moment. There must be "deposited" in it,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, § 70, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 113 (*Non nobis, Domine*), 5. In A.V., Ps. cxv, 5.

therefore, the aesthetic experience of a religious consciousness. To those enjoying such a religious consciousness, it has a value other than that which it has for the art connoisseur as such. So we expect every cultured person to value Raphael's *Madonna*, if not El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* ; but the religious person, as such, however cultured, does not value them very much more than most inferior works of a similar kind ; for he is looking not for aesthetic experience *simpliciter*, but for the initiation of a trend of experience leading towards union with God. A rude crucifix, and particularly one that we can believe to have been clasped by the dying Saint Francis of Assisi, or perhaps, better, fashioned by the saint, would plainly be more efficient as a "holy thing" than any Raphael or Velasquez. Nevertheless, a devout person confronted by such a crucifix would also "see more in it" as a "work of art" than would a non-devout person of the same artistic education. In stimulating a long trend of experience in the direction, ultimately, of mystical union, the devout person would necessarily stimulate in himself aesthetic activity much more vigorous than would otherwise emerge. As Professor Collingwood observes, "worship is, naturally, at bottom an exercise of the aesthetic consciousness. All acts of worship, whether they take the form of singing, dancing, speech, or the like, are first and foremost aesthetic acts. . . . But worship is no more mere art than holiness is mere beauty."<sup>1</sup> Worship is always art, not merely in the sense in which prayer must always be literature, but art of a special kind. Like Wagnerian opera, it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* ; but it is one in which there are no spectators or audience, for it is *λειτουργία*.<sup>2</sup> But it can never be merely art of any kind ; for it must stimulate experience much further in a certain direction than it would ever be the business of art to do. If Wagner stimulated anything other than aesthetic experience, it would be in order to elicit, indirectly, aesthetic activity in greater splendour. Solemn worship never has as its aim the emergence of such aesthetic activity ; but if it succeeds in its own purpose, this inevitably happens also.

Moreover, corporate worship is corporate to a greater degree than is immediately obvious. Not only the *sanctus*, but all acts of

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> From *λεώς*, *ἔργον*.

worship are undertaken *cum angelis et archangelis, cum thronis et dominationibus* ; and our *confiteor* is to the whole court of heaven. Strictly, all worship is corporate : the Carthusian considers himself no less in this company in respect of the offices he says in his quasi-eremitical seclusion than in respect of those he sings in the monastic choir. The aim of worship is to collaborate with all creation in a vast act leading to mystical union with the Creator ; and the aesthetic ground of this is communicated in terms of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Considered as art, worship has, therefore, a distinct *motif* ; but worship is not less art on that account. Nevertheless it must always be distinguished from art in that as such it has no self-consciousness. Indeed, this distinction must apply to all efficient religious art. It is art in the course of performing a special function. In this, however, it is in the same case with much other art — most obviously, perhaps, with domestic architecture.

### § 67. *The Idea of Revelation*

Although it may be more natural to the idiom of Buddhism, for instance, to speak of enlightenment or knowledge, the idea of revelation is alien to no religion. Christianity has a very important and definite place for it. Revelation is not, of course, a series of dogmatic propositions : the dogmatic propositions recount the revelation. To prophets, revelation is supposed to come with special force, richness, or clarity. According to Christian doctrine, revelation means access to truth ordinarily inaccessible to reasonable persons. It implies the unfolding of God in some special way not enjoyed in ordinary experience ; and the result, in a responsive creature, must therefore involve knowledge not ordinarily enjoyed. So, while a man cannot ordinarily know that God forgives sin, he may, on the information of the Creed, have this fact revealed to him. The incarnation of the Logos in the person of our Lord is called revelation that is full, final, or perfect, as opposed to the revelation available in prophetic or apostolic utterance, for example. Revelation does not in the least necessarily involve any degree of mystical union with God. On the contrary, it usually precedes such union very considerably in time. How, then, does it enter experience?



If we return for a moment to the subject discussed in the preceding section, we observe that the idea of revelation is not peculiar to religion, but also enters art. Artists do not, it is true, practise art in order to have revelation. But they generally suppose that they impart some kind of revelation to those who contemplate their work. What is the nature of this revelation? No sane artist would claim, *qua* artist, that he produced works that were the lively oracles of God. But every poet, musician, and painter intends, by his art, to unfold reality to those who contemplate it. A painter who paints a picture of Piccadilly Circus says, in effect: "You have probably seen this place; but have you seen as much of it as this?" If the communication is successful, the result is that I, having seen Piccadilly Circus many times before, now see it more vividly; but I also see more of it. My selection of objects had been capricious in the first place, and had then become somewhat mechanical; but now more of the reality of Piccadilly Circus is presented to me than had before been unfolded or revealed. The artist has stimulated in me aesthetic activity; but he may be said to have revealed something to me. When art speaks of itself as revealing truth, it must mean simply that it reveals reality by stimulating aesthetic experience. To some extent I reveal this to myself. Good art may help me to do it better; but I must have the aesthetic activity before the revelation may be effective. An artist may also claim to "reveal himself" in his work; but, while great artists do, and probably ought to do this, it is not the *métier* of an artist, as such, to do it. If an artist does it, I may respond to his activity by empathy, an act of the will. His *métier*, *qua* artist, however, is to stimulate not my will, but my aesthetic activity; and this is the revelation of art.

In religion, we do not doubt that God himself is revealed to us. But in our response to revelation, in faith, we do not know God, as we have seen, quidditatively. If we did, we should have at once attained to a higher mode of experience, that of the will in mystical union. Revelation, ordinarily, does not effect this at once.

We may say, then, that revelation enters experience at that which is, in Crocean language, the theoretic level. What is revealed to us, whether it come in a theological proposition about God, or in

the sacraments, or otherwise, enters our experience as knowledge. It would seem that if it enters our experience as a proposition to be believed, it is useless until recast in the lowest ground of knowledge, the aesthetic. If it come to us as aesthetic experience, we have that kind of intuition/expressions from which we may proceed in the direction of mystical union.

Theoretically, it would seem that revelation ought always to come to us in this more direct manner than through the medium of theological propositions. But is it really so? If we were more expert in aesthetic activity and less addicted to intellectual abstraction from a comparatively narrow field of aesthesis, might not the whole of revelation be so presented to us? It is well known that in the Orthodox Church, where there is a different attitude to dogmatic theology in popular religion, revelation tends to be conceived as entering experience at the aesthetic level to a degree hardly known in the west. But we can consider objective truth and error only by intellectual reflection, so that even if revelation enters our experience at the aesthetic level, it cannot take us very far without intellectual reflection. Without this abstraction we should not be wholly uninformed; but we could do little with any information we had. In fact, by our nature, we cannot avoid making intellectual abstraction from this lower experience. Either, therefore, religious truth must come to us in the form of dogmatic propositions, or else, if it come as aesthetic knowledge, we must immediately convert it into dogmatic propositions.

On the other hand, the necessity to resolve intellectual abstraction into aesthetic activity is even more urgent. There is no truth about religion more vital than that we must become as little children in order to enter the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> To the child, more than to anyone else, aesthetic experience is the whole patrimony of knowledge. The kingdom of God is not ours, however, in virtue of our being children. Otherwise it would have been ours already. It is ours if we *become* as children, that is, if we recast our intellectual reflection into genuine aesthetic experience. Only so do we make the Creed our creed. Only so can the greater measure of reality

<sup>1</sup> Mark x, 15; Luke xviii, 17. This truth is behind Richard of Saint Victor's famous contrast: *per meditationem rimamur, per contemplationem miramur*.

afforded by revelation take its new bearing from aesthetic experience towards mystical union with God.

### § 68. *Aesthetic Experience and the Fine Point*

We have occasionally alluded to the mystical idea of an "apex" or "fine point" of the mind. We must now inquire into its nature, in order to ascertain how this important idea is to be related to aesthetic experience.

The idea is ancient, having made an early appearance in Christian literature. Jerome (c. 340-420) is the first to use the term *synteresis*; and this term became recognized in the theological usage of the Western Church.<sup>1</sup> Among the schoolmen the idea is quite familiar. Bonaventure speaks of an *apex mentis seu scintilla*.<sup>2</sup> Thomas regularly uses the term *synteresis*, and has definite teaching about it.<sup>3</sup>

According to the theorists, there is, in spite of the Fall, an uncorrupted point of the will from which radiates the tendency to act charitably and do the right. Our corruption is in the confinement of this tendency to that "fine point" where we box it up, through the prevalence of other tendencies in the "area" of the

<sup>1</sup> *In Ezech.* I, 1 (Migne, *P.L.* vol. 25, col. 22): "Quartamque ponunt quam . . . Graeci vocant συντήρησιν, quae scintilla conscientiae in Cain quoque pectore non exstinguitur, et qua victi voluptatibus vel furore . . . nos peccare sentimus. . . . In scripturis [eam] interdum vocari legimus Spiritum."

<sup>2</sup> *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum*, c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* *S. Th.* I, 79, 12, where, raising the question "utrum synderesis sit quaedam specialis potentia ab aliis distincta", Aquinas decides "non est potentia, sed habitus [naturalis]". Again, "synderesis dicitur lex intellectus nostri, in quantum est habitus continens praecepta legis naturalis, quae sunt prima principia operum humanorum" (*op. cit.* I-2, 94, 1 ad 2; cf. 2-2, 47, 6 ad 1; 2 *Sent.* dist. 7, q. 1, 2 ad 3; dist. 39, q. 3, 1.) It is in this "superior pars animae" that there is the "imago Deitatis" (2 *Sent.* dist. 24, q. 2, 2 ad 3). The whole subject is considered in some detail in *De Veritate*, 16. Here, besides a more intricate discussion "utrum synderesis sit potentia vel habitus", the question "utrum possit peccare" is negatively answered. To the question "utrum in aliquo exstinguatur" the reply is that it never can be, even in the greatest heretics and sinners: even the damned and the devils themselves retain it. Moreover, "non est ratio superior, sed se habet ad rationem superiorem sicut intellectus principiorum ad ratiocinationem de conclusionibus" (2 *Sent.* dist. 24, q. 3, 3 ad 5). This is the part of the mind that shuns evil and inclines to good (*S. Th.* I, 79, 12). But, above all, it is distinguished, as "habitus naturalis principiorum moralium", from "intellectus principiorum".

mind. Those who set out to find in themselves (*a*) a pure creaturely act, and (*b*) a plenary divine inworking, have recourse to this "fine point", which they regard as the holy of holies within the temple of the mind, the apex of the mind's Carmel or Sinai. By undergoing with their whole will the holiness that is there, they are possessed of God in their active mind, by a "spreading" of the incense, hitherto confined in this inner chamber, throughout the mind's temple.

It is noteworthy that this doctrine is but a refinement of the Augustinian. For Augustine, God was to be sought as the Light of the mind's light, the Good of the mind's goodness. In the "fine point", contact with God might be maintained in its original immediacy.

The doctrine of the "fine point", it will be readily observed, easily lends itself to the suggestion that there is something belonging to the mind which is God himself. Eckhart, for instance, moves from the Thomist position into speaking as if this apex or "fine point" were an uncreated part of the mind, as if, in fact, it were God. But even the most orthodox mystics are inclined to speak after this fashion when they want to stress the peculiar nature of this vantage point, and are here liable to that kind of misinterpretation to which we have seen them to be so often liable when they are read from a strictly theological point of view.

A more guarded doctrine makes the *aliquid animae* a created effect (the *scintilla*) supported or inworked by God with a peculiar immediacy or purity, so that, by identifying our whole will with it, we become wholly the children of God and the shrines of deity, and are free to experience his inworking by an empathy he stimulates if he sees fit.

Recurring throughout centuries of mystical literature, the philosophers' idea takes several forms. Sometimes it is the apex, when the mind is conceived as a kind of pyramid; sometimes it is a core, when the mind is conceived as a kind of centrifugal sphere. The consequent metaphors change accordingly: the Shechinah may come down from the mount into the camp, or the perfume may spread throughout the temple. Sometimes its confinement is conceived as a weight placed upon it, the removal of

which liberates the soul from the impediments that keep it from mystical union. Beatrice expounds such a doctrine in the *Commedia*.<sup>1</sup> When the impediments are removed, the soul soars to its spiritual home.

The important point for our purpose seems to be that to identify ourselves with the "fine point" is not to take any particular aesthetic ground; that is to say, we do not thereby claim knowledge, but identify ourselves with the spring of right will, which is *caritas*.

It is at this point that, in the mystical state, the mystic has his specific experience. We have seen how the mystics tend to speak of being asleep in God's arms, unconscious; and how they are nevertheless eager to say that they enjoy experience more intensely than ever before. A French mystic says of experience at this fine point: "Tout le reste de mon âme et ses facultés n'en ont point joui, mais elle n'a duré environ qu'un demi *Ave Maria*".<sup>2</sup> Mother Cecilia of the Nativity, a little-read mystic, takes a characteristic view of the question when she says that God, acting on this fine point, stirs the soul from within, as a spurt of water at the bottom of a reservoir stirs it from the centre until even at the surface there is a slight movement.<sup>3</sup> In the same passage she also likens the process to the stirring of a tiny vial of sweet perfume, which charges the whole air with scent, even at a considerable distance from the vial. We recall Saint Teresa's use of a similar figure, as also her references to an inner chamber of our being where "His Majesty awaits us". Mother Cecilia also describes this core or centre or bottom of the mind as "the intimate part of the will".<sup>4</sup> If we may

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, I, 136-142:

"Non dêi più ammirar, se bene stimo,  
Lo tuo salir, se non come d' un rivo,  
Che d' alto monte scende giuso ad imo.  
Maraviglia sarebbe in te, se, privo  
D' impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,  
Com' a terra quieto il fuoco vivo.  
Quinci rivolse invêr lo cielo il viso."

<sup>2</sup> To the question of the relation of the fine point to the mystical states, Henri Brémond very profitably devotes the third chapter of *La Métaphysique des saints (Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France, Paris, 1929, vol. 7, pp. 112-139)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Transformation of the Soul in God*, stanza 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* stanza 1.

hope for a solution in so difficult a question, it is here that we think it may be found.

The idea of connaturalization with God is fundamental to theology. Saint Thomas teaches that, apart from the question of supernatural love, by which we are thus connaturalized, the creature *naturally* loves God more than itself,<sup>1</sup> although, in the case of fallen man, ineffectively, because without grace he cannot truly so direct his will. But in order to have true friendship with God, or any experience that might be called mystical, we need more than this natural love. We must have sanctifying grace, and the indwelling of the three Persons of the Trinity in the soul. Nevertheless, there is something in us that makes it possible for us, under certain conditions and in spite of our notorious attraction to evil, to love God. We may call it a pull or tendency in the direction of God. Even when it is inactive, the seed of it is there. Now, we can hardly speak of a tendency to *know* God. The tendency is to *love* him. We might speak of the tendency of a son to love his father, but not of his tendency to know his father. Although grounded in knowledge, the life of the tendency does not seem to lie there, but rather in the will, which has, in spite of its great waywardness, a pull or tendency in the direction of loving God. What makes it possible for the mystics, for example, to be drawn to God, is that they have this tendency. All men have it ; but in the mystics it becomes no mere tendency, but, at length, the normal direction of the will. If we think of the love of God for man as a kind of magnetic attraction, that point at which this tendency in our will occurs may be considered as the point sensitive to the magnet. This, surely, is what the mystics mean by the "apex of the mind". It has often been regarded as a capacity for special knowledge or "interior light". But it seems to us that this is due to a failure to distinguish between it and its ground, which, like the ground of all acts of will, is knowledge, and, at bottom, aesthetic knowledge. If we were to press the spatial metaphor, we might speak of both (a) an apex and (b) a core or bottom of the soul. But it would not be at the bottom of experience, aesthesis, that the

<sup>1</sup> *S. Th.* 1-2, 109, 3. This was defined against Baius in the bull of Pius V, *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*.

capacity for attraction might be found to reside, but at the top, that is, in the will. One may, indeed, speak of a general tendency to have genuine experience in every mode, that is, to apprehend reality by the activity of our mind ; but this tendency does not put us into a relationship of love to God. We cannot say that the genuine apprehension of reality in aesthetic experience has anything in it that seems specifically to lead us to union with God. Nevertheless, aesthesis, as the *sine qua non* of this and all experience, must be the root of this fine point of the mind of which the mystics speak, although it is not at this root that there may be said to reside the tendency to love God, which is an act of the will. It is as beings who will that we may be said to be in any sense beings capable of loving God ; and it is in the region of the will that we must look for this alleged faculty or capacity for being drawn from our waywardness in the direction of mystical union, which is an act of the will in love.

We have considered mystical union with God as the empathetic activity of the will in love — the will active in God by empathy. The apex of the mind, synteresis, would then seem to be a point in our will at which it is capable of being engaged in this supreme activity. Whatever this mysterious point may be, it evidently must have its root in aesthetic experience ; but we have no reason to suppose, and much reason not to suppose, that it can be active at this ground level. The virtue of this cell in us lies not at its root but in its flower. It lies in the will, where empathy takes place. For, as Aquinas observes, it is *habitus naturalis primorum principiorum moralium*, not *intellectus principiorum*. Nevertheless, without the root, the flower, with its virtue, could not exist.

### § 69. *The Beatific Vision*

The Beatific Vision is in a sense beyond religion ; for it is the final state towards which religion strives. But before drawing our general conclusion it is desirable to consider this beatific state, because, as the ideal state of our relationship with God, its nature is peculiarly interesting for our purpose.

Catholic theology has always taught a resurrection of the *body*.

Of course, we cannot know precisely what is to be its manner. The glorified body is to be incorruptible.<sup>1</sup> *Tunc justi fulgebunt sicut sol in regno Patris eorum.*<sup>2</sup> The beatified are to be engaged in the continual praise of God ;<sup>3</sup> and they are to be incapable of sin.<sup>4</sup> Above all, when we love God in this state, it will be with our whole being, although love itself is an act of the will.<sup>5</sup> We are to be joined to God and see him as he is.<sup>6</sup>

Remarkable importance has been attached, traditionally, to the idea of a resurrection of the same body that the soul now vivifies on earth. This body may now be in a state of flux, chemically, so that not a single molecule that it possessed at birth will it possess at death ; and yet, it has been said, because I can truly say at death that I have the same body I had when I was born, I shall be able to say, in some similar sense, that my glorified body is the same that I now possess. Otherwise, thinks Saint Thomas, there would be no resurrection, but the assumption of a new body.<sup>7</sup> It is a fundamental feature of Thomism that the union between body and soul is permanent.<sup>8</sup> The general notion of an intimate connection

<sup>1</sup> Saint Thomas thinks this is to be so "per naturam . . . quia cessabit motus caeli, qui est causa corruptionis" (*Opusc.* 4 (ed. Rom., 10), 24).

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii, 43. Developing Chrysostom's commentary on this text, Thomas affirms that "corpora sanctorum glorificata lucebunt plus quam sol, et sol septuplum quam nunc, et corpora sanctorum septuplum quam tunc sol" (*Opusc.* 4, 36).

<sup>3</sup> *S. Th.* 2-2, 13, 4 ; 2 *Sent.* dist. 2, q. 2, 5 ; 4 *Sent.* dist. 44, q. 2, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *S. Th.* 1, 62, 8 ; 1, 82, 2 ; 1, 94, 1 ; 1, 100, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Opusc.* 17 (ed. Rom. 18), 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Quodlib.* 8, 20 : "Beati autem adeo sunt Deo conjuncti, ut ipse sit eis ratio cujuslibet cognitionis et operationis : aliter enim actus beatitudinis per alias cogitationes et operationes sanctorum impediretur : et ideo illud ad quod sancti primo attendunt, est ipse Deus, et eum habent medium cujuslibet cognitionis, et regulam cujuslibet operationis : et sic per prius contemplantur Divinitatem Christi quam ejus humanitatem".

Moreover, "videbitur autem Deus per essentiam ab intellectu creato, non per aliquam sui similitudinem, qua in intellectu praesente, res intellecta possit distare, sicut lapis per similitudinem suam praesens est oculo, per substantiam vero absens ; sed . . . ipsa Dei essentia intellectui creato conjungitur quodammodo, ut Deus per essentiam videri possit" (*Opusc.* 3 (ed. Rom., 2), 164 ; cf. *S. Th.* 1, 12, 7 ad 1).

<sup>7</sup> *S. Th.* 3 Supp. 79, 1 : "nec dicetur resurrectio sed magis novi corporis assumptio".

<sup>8</sup> In Thomist philosophy, soul is related to body as form to matter.



between body and soul is an early one : not only do all the ancient creeds embody the *carnis resurrectio*, and the councils condemning Origenism clearly teach it, but the Athanasian Creed says that all men shall rise again with their bodies (*resurgere habent cum corporibus suis*), and, against the Catharists, the Lateran Council declares that all men shall rise again with their own bodies, the bodies that they now have (*omnes cum suis propriis resurgent corporibus, quae nunc gestant*).

Such an emphasis on such a point is inevitably tedious to modern ears ; but we have necessarily exhibited the concern of tradition to show this continuity. It has not been for nothing that councils, fathers, and schoolmen have laboured the point. It has sometimes been necessary for Christianity to resist a tendency in some circles to regard the physical frame as a suit of clothes, shabby and unworthy of the human soul, and which, if there is to be a resurrection, must be exchanged for one of an entirely different and very superior design. Catholic theology, on the other hand, regarding the permanency of the union of body and soul as important, looks forward to a beatified state in which we shall enjoy experience recognizable as distinctly continuous with that which, in our relatively dull and stultified fashion, we now enjoy in earthly activity. The bliss of the soul will be somehow communicated to the glorified body, *ad modum redundantiae*.<sup>1</sup> This body shall “ run, and not be weary ” ; this body shall “ walk, and not faint ” ;<sup>2</sup> for it shall be without fatigue perfectly obedient.

Now, in the Beatific Vision, the beatitude consists in enjoying the divine essence. This act we have described as a perfect empathetic activity of the beatified will in love ; and we recall how a foretaste of this empathy is enjoyed in mystical union on earth. Nevertheless, the beatified are said to “ see God face to face ” ; and, in accordance with the earliest patristic doctrine, the Council of Florence defined this vision as the cause of the delight of the blessed. It is clear that in order to love God, as the blessed do *par excellence*, they must know him with corresponding vividness. This knowledge may truly be said to be the cause of their joy, as it is plainly the ground of it. The blessed cannot see God with

<sup>1</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, 4, 84-88.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xl, 31.

the eyes of their glorified bodies any better than we can with our physical eyes ; for he is *Actus Purus*. But is there any reason to suppose that the blessed have a type of cognition radically different from any known in our experience ?

That they do not need logical reflection or ratiocination, as do we, is as one would expect. They are able to grasp reality in a manner so direct and comprehensive that it would be absurd to suppose them having to resort to anything so complicated and tedious as a syllogism. Nor, in the perfected state of their wills, can we attach much significance to the idea of their having morals. It would seem that, in such a state as theirs, there is simply knowledge and will. How, then, do they know ? How do they lay hold of reality in such a manner that they may love God so splendidly ? They have a body, untrammelled by the defects of the poor thing we call our body ; but it is, nevertheless, in some sense, this same body, transformed. They must have, if this be the case, aesthetic activity. There is no reason to suppose that it is other than it is for us — the ground of all experience. But if their bodies are as wonderful as theologians insist, their aesthetic experience may be correspondingly wonderful, compared with ours. Nevertheless, it is still the same mode of activity. It is, in all its fulness, as God means it to be, the ground of experience. In contrast to ours, which nibbles at reality, and must be coaxed continually by a sluggish will putting back higher abstractions into the crucible of experience, their aesthetic activity need be simply held alongside of their perfected will, as its ground. They may then, it would seem, intuit reality on a scale so comprehensive as to make logical abstraction redundant.

Of possible interpretations alternative to this one, the most important would appear to be that which says that the beatified have some faculty of perception “ by pure species ”. Saint Thomas attributes such a faculty to his angels, who are “ pure intelligences ”. If the Thomist angelology be true, angels do not concern us ; for they are non-sensory beings to whom aesthetic experience is impossible. But it has often been held, by Dom Chapman, for instance, that preternaturally we have a faculty of perception of this kind, comparable, although on a higher plane, to telepathy,

and that it is this that we exercise in the higher stages of mystical union. We firmly resist this view ; nor is it the least necessary or plausible, when the true nature of the aesthetic activity is understood. We repudiate it equally in the case of the beatified ; for, if they had any such mysterious faculty, and yet had bodies of such splendour and vigour, these bodies would appear to be singularly useless ; and the aesthetic experience available by means of them would appear to be equally futile. The whole point of a resurrection of the body such as is presented to us in the ancient creeds, the fathers, and the schoolmen, must be destroyed by the elimination of the eternal, and, for us, irreplaceable, value of aesthetic activity. If the very mode of cognition were to be so entirely and fundamentally changed, we might as well be disembodied, like Saint Thomas's angels.

The importance for our purpose of the view we take here is that, if it be correct, the aesthetic activity described as proper to the beatified is aesthetic experience as God means us to have it. What we call aesthetic experience, here on earth, is, although radically the same activity and the ground of all experience, a puny grasp of reality. But it is the basis of all the grasp that we have. By means of it few of even the devout may hope to attain on earth more than dim analogical knowledge of God by faith. Even the favoured may hope for but a slight foretaste of the bliss of heaven, by their mystical union with God in love. But if we could have it in such a full and resplendent degree as the blessed, we should know God "as he is", and perfectly love him. To the extent that we do have it at all, we *can* so know and love him. It may be, indeed, that our childhood's picture of heaven, with its jewelled gates, its crystal rivers, its streets of gold, and the everlasting music of its choirs, is not quite so far from eternal truth as our adult sophistication has since taught us to believe.

### § 70. *Conclusion*

We emerge from our investigation at least satisfied that the function of aesthetic experience in religion is one of paramount importance. That its importance should ever have been under-

estimated has been due in no small measure to a misunderstanding of the nature of aesthetic experience itself. Croce's isolation of the aesthetic fact has made it plainer to us that we may legitimately look here for something of fundamental significance for religion. If we can truly apprehend reality at all by aesthetic experience, any limitation in such apprehension seems to be due to a general deficiency in ourselves rather than to a deficiency inherent in this mode of apprehension.

We chose to study the crux of our problem at the feet of the mystics, knowing that if we could hold our view there, we should not be disconcerted in it elsewhere. We saw that one of the difficulties in dealing with mystical literature is that the mystics must not be expected to supply us with easy support for any theory; for they necessarily write not to help us to establish philosophical theses, but to win our wills to God. It would be quite possible to extract from the writings of the greatest Catholic mystics pronouncements that would seriously compromise their authors in an ecclesiastical tribunal; and on the other hand it would be equally possible, and equally unsatisfactory, to extract from their works evidence of their doctrinal soundness. Poets and mystics must not be read in such a manner, to establish or challenge a philosophical or theological issue. Otherwise the Church might have condemned for heresy many of the mystics she has most properly canonized. But she recognizes as her best sons and daughters those great saints, some of whose utterances cannot commend themselves to a theologian's ear. We, for our part, do no more than profess to find their works at least patient of our solution to a philosophical problem with which, as mystics, they are very rightly not at all concerned. But we would claim also that no philosophical treatment of either poetry or mysticism can profess to do more.

It has also been our aim to exhibit some of the limitations of the part that aesthetic experience may play in religion. We have gladly yielded as much ground as possible to non- (*i.e.* supra-) aesthetic activity, so that we might be under no delusion as to the extent of our claims. To the reflective, philosophical element in religion we have endeavoured to give the high place it has always enjoyed so widely in the tradition of the Church. Perhaps we

have been even more anxious not to encroach on the vital importance of the part that must be played by the will, including, of course, the moral element in religion ; for antinomianism is probably a more widespread danger than the extent of its more spectacular forms indicates. At the risk, therefore, of sometimes appearing to digress from our subject, we have pressed the immense claims of the element of the will in religion. Indeed, we should be eager to hold that wherever the claims of aesthetic experience may justly be said to derogate from the claims of this element of the will (which directs us to, and plays a permanent part in, that union with God in love that is the goal of religion), the analysis of experience must be gravely in error.

But when all this has been said, and we sit back to review the results of our investigation, we feel assured that aesthesis is the ground of religion. This would not in itself be as meagre a result as it might sound, even if it were all that we had to say. It is not to be regarded a small matter even to discover that one has been talking prose all one's life, if, like M. Jourdain, we did not know it before. But what are the practical implications of our finding ? For it is not *merely* to announce such a finding, however important it may be, that we have exercised ourselves throughout the foregoing pages. If there be any truth in what we have claimed for aesthetic experience in religion, the recognition of it must considerably alter the attitude to religion of anyone for whom this truth has been in the least obscured.

Religion, we have found, is bound up with a contemplative attitude. It is this that the pragmatistic verbalism of our present civilization has, to say the least, tended to destroy. If the Church can get people to *look at* anything, rather than use it or talk about it, we have at least achieved *le premier pas*. Let them look at even the beauties of sense, or, by a more intricate process, wonder at the human soul : then they may be able to make religious ideas their own, casting them back into the crucible of experience. By this means they may come to be able to *look at* even the images of God. Mystical experience is another thing : we can offer no assurance in Christianity that anything we do will induce it.

For its substance, religion depends, no doubt, more on the will than on aesthesis. But should we be content to ascribe contemporary irreligion entirely to ill will? Is there, after all, no truth at all in the conviction of so many churchmen that multitudes remaining indifferent to the claims of religion nevertheless do "mean well"? They remain, it is said, indifferent to the claims, but not to the *pressure* of these claims, for they have never truly felt it. We cannot explain even most contemporary irreligion by contemporary lack of good will. If one asks, then, whether contemporary irreligion be due more to the lack of good will or the lack of the contemplative attitude, we shall certainly feel on much safer ground with the latter than with the former explanation.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most serious difficulty with which the Church is faced is that in modern times we have almost stopped contemplating anything. Lovers have even stopped contemplating their mistresses, preferring to pat them and play tennis with them. We need hardly be surprised to find the revelation of God above our

<sup>1</sup> Catholic theology, in accordance with biblical and patristic evidence, has always recognized the corruption of the human will apart from grace. This corruption contaminates all activity; and so, of course, we may presume that it contaminates aesthetic activity. This is not in the least incompatible with Croce's ethic, as developed in the *Pratica*, where he recognizes that "we err because we wish to err", that is, by an act of the will we allow our theoretic activity, aesthetic or intellectual, to be contaminated by our immorality. But Catholic theology recognizes, as Croce cannot do, that such contamination is secondary: *primarily*, original sin consists in desiring independence from God. Adam is supposed to have desired to be equal with God, not in everything (*similitudo omnimodae aequiparentiae*), for that would have meant Adam was insane, but to the extent of securing his own autonomy of will (*similitudo imitationis*). As Aquinas puts it, *sibi inniti voluit*. (*S.Th.*, 2-2, 163, 2: "Primus homo peccavit principaliter appetendo similitudinem Dei quantum ad scientiam boni et mali . . . ut scilicet per virtutem propriae naturae determinaret sibi quid esset bonum et quid malum ad agendum".) The assertion of such autonomy is in the last resort the refusal to adore God, to give God the response due to his love. The *result* of this refusal is the loss of the capacity to see straight (aesthesis) and think straight (intellectual reflection) to a degree adequate for providing the ground for the attainment of man's supreme end. But our point is that even when grace is applied to this corrupt will its work must find its beginning and foundation, like that of all experience, at the aesthetic level. Again and again, in contemplation, the justified must return to the *terminus a quo* that is still the indispensable substructure of all other experience. Only by returning to the nadir can he, grace-illuminated and so capable of bearing the fruits of grace in the will, reach the zenith.

heads when the revelation of the beauties of sense has hardly got under our skins.

Aesthetic experience will not make religion flourish. In this it is in the same case with rational reflection. We may have aestheticism as well as rationalism. But without reason, that is, intellectual reflection, we shall have nothing that we can recognize as true religion ; and, *a fortiori*, we can have no religion without aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience must be cultivated, fervently and with missionary zeal, by all to whom is committed the task of preparing the soil for the revelation of God, and of developing the seed when it is sown. We need freedom of the will in order to respond to God ; but if we have not even a firm ground of aesthesis for our will, it will be neither good nor bad, but shiftily and indifferent, as indeed so often it is, in its response to God.

When from the thicket of experience we disentangle the aesthetic fact, we find it to be radical to religion, as the *terminus a quo*. The Beatific Vision is the *terminus ad quem*, and nevertheless permanently grounded in aesthetic experience. But, when associated with other experience in certain complex modes and in certain aspects of religion, the function of aesthetic experience in religion may be said to be as manifold as these modes and aspects. Religion is, as we have said,<sup>1</sup> practically conterminous with life. We dare not posit a limit to the diversity of its aspects. Nor can we possibly classify them, or the situations that arise when such complex modes of activity are put into relationship with religion. In the broadest sense of the term, such complex activity is "art" ; and any classification of it into categories would be as artificial as a classification of the towns of Europe by their alphabetical order. Some examples of the functions performed by these practical manipulations of aesthetic experience in religion may, however, clarify the position to which our general finding directs us.

When the plain man is to some extent conscious of his religious aim and takes part in creative pursuits, such as, say, the planning of cities or the invention of plastics, he is aware that his activity, to the extent that it is genuinely creative, is somehow united with

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, § 46, p. 124.

or associated to the purpose of God, the goal of his religion. He enjoys aesthetic intuition, and, like every artist, "expresses himself" in his art; but the direction of his whole experience towards God makes him conscious of being, in his art, more than an artist. He is not merely communicating aesthetic experience or "depositing" it. He is not simply taking aesthetic exercise, enjoying art as a game, although, as an artist, he necessarily does this too. What he feels he is doing in addition to this is not merely accelerating the speed of civilization or augmenting the welfare of humanity. He is aware, dimly, it may be, of being somehow taken into a partnership with God himself, in the fulfilment of a divine purpose. Perhaps something of this awareness is present in the popular hope for a "better world", even when it is crudely conceived as a messianic age more efficient for the well-being of man. For, while many such ideas of "progress" towards an earthly paradise are notoriously anthropocentric, and sometimes grossly misconceived, we cannot lightly dismiss the conviction of a man that he is not working for his own amusement, or because he must live, or because he is filled with altruistic motives towards unborn generations, but simply because he believes himself called by God to share somehow in the divine creativity. He is aware that what he is doing has an intrinsic and eternal significance: it is not merely a convenient machinery for the discipline and formation of human character, or to fit mankind for an eschatological state quite divorced from the ordinary aims of human life. When this conviction is present, aesthetic activity is felt to be manipulated in some way that tends towards a relationship with God more intimate than that in which people ordinarily stand.

In corporate worship we are especially aware of a peculiar manipulation of aesthetic experience. As art, such worship has a special *motif* of its own, varying considerably with the individual cultus, but always making use of aesthetic experience as an essential basis for a special activity not ostensibly mystical in character, but having, indeed, a mystical direction. This direction is, however, one of which the ordinary worshipper is, at best, but vaguely conscious. On the other hand, every ordinarily devout person is certainly aware, in worship, of taking part in an activity of some



eternal significance. A particular kind of worship is often regarded as of divine authority ; or it may be held that in a certain liturgical framework God does in fact reveal himself at least more readily, perhaps also more effectively, and lead the worshipper in a divinely prescribed path. This may be, and obviously very often is, the merest superstition. One might suppose that because the eucharist is worthily celebrated in one's own parish church, a Gothic building, its celebration in a Baroque church is less revelatory or desirable. But we cannot always repudiate the claims of a devout person, or of a body of the devout, that in worshipping in a certain manner they are conscious not only of training themselves towards a right relationship with God, or of seeking him, or learning about him, but of playing an appointed part in a divine plan. This awareness may often be one of having been indubitably given, in fact, a particular office in collaboration with the celestial hierarchy itself, and a responsibility for performing a function in a certain manner, involving rigid obedience to certain instructions for the satisfactory fulfilment of the duties of the office. That it may be sheer caprice, especially among the intolerant or self-centred, is eagerly conceded ; but it may also be the subject of a conviction genuinely bound up with the most profound convictions of the religious consciousness. It often happens that a body of the faithful will as readily throw over their belief in all divine revelation as forego their adherence to a specific liturgical approach. Within the Roman Church seven primary and twenty-one secondary rites, besides the Latin, manifest the importance that people attach to distinctive usages.

That the distinctions are intimately connected with aesthetic experience needs no exposition. But, while educated persons are always capable of artistic appreciation of usages other than their own, devout persons, however well educated, are rarely prepared for an interchange of usages in their devotional life, however much they may appreciate from an artistic point of view the practices of others. I may regard with the most profound admiration the administration of Holy Communion under one kind, and, if so gifted, even paint a picture of such a scene in San Marco on Easter morning ; but nevertheless I may find the practice wholly un-

satisfactory for my own devotional life. One may often go out of one's way, and to an artistically mediocre environment, in order to have a specific aesthetic experience seemingly indispensable for the fulfilment of one's own devotional task. Setting aside the dully conservative prejudices and foolish irrelevancies that are so very often the sole cause of such scruples, one must admit that the conviction we describe may still be genuine in some cases. The only adequate explanation seems to be that it is the result of a divine commission to fulfil a definite function in the devotional life of the Church, carrying out prescribed duties in a prescribed manner, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

If this be so, we may suppose that, in the aesthetic experience that is the ground of all devotional practice, we are somehow used by God, who initiates what is to be ultimately mystical union with himself by a definite commission to us to have aesthetic experience of a particular kind. I may use as the basis of my worship an aesthetic experience *A*, and may then use to better advantage a more complex aesthetic experience *B*, by which I more fully grasp reality by my superior aesthetic activity; but I may nevertheless find that in aesthetic experience *C*, which I know to be intrinsically inferior activity, I have the ground for my appointed role. This principle is surely behind the rationale of statutory offices such as the Breviary, for example. For a priest, there is no substitute. There are many other devotions that a priest might make to his great advantage; and it is impossible to claim that no "better" devotion could ever be found for him on a particular occasion than the recitation of Terce, Sext, and None for the day. But it is this devotion, with its aesthetic ground, and no other, that will lead him towards his appointed goal; and for it he must exchange nothing else, however rich or apparently fruitful.

Enormous significance is in fact attached, in the religious consciousness of the faithful, to what are, from a purely artistic point of view, the veriest trifles. Taste in devotion, like taste in other spheres, may be educated. But the more educated are here, as elsewhere, not less, but more, fastidious about the physical symbol that represents the aesthetic experience forming the ground of devotion. This physical symbol would seem to be the matrix in which is

initiated the aesthetic experience providing the ground of the whole activity of the cultus. On the other hand, mystical activity, as we have conceived it, begins in a matrix of a much less restricted kind. The mystic plants himself no less firmly in the earth ; but he takes the whole created universe as the matrix for his aesthetic ground. For the ordinary life of the cultus, such a matrix is much too vast. The ordinary worshipper, even if a consummate artist, cannot direct so large a range of his whole experience in the direction of God as can the mystic. His will is not adequately trained. He must first choose a modest, restricted, perhaps narrow, and, it seems, divinely appointed, matrix from which to evolve aesthetic activity that can be the ground of his whole reorientated experience. This is not a doctrine confined to liturgical theory, although there it has peculiar force ; for every artist knows that aesthetic experience may be won only through some limitation of the matrix. So long as attempts were made to preserve in the structure of the motor-car the peculiar charm of the horse-driven cab, the results were absurd. Nature must be obeyed, as it is in stream-lined transport ; and if one insists on the beauty of a horse, one must have the horse ; for there is no way of making the nature of one thing into that of another. A sculptor might colour and drape his statues, and make them look like the exhibits at Madame Tussaud's ; but his art limits him. Art is fully accustomed to renouncing aesthetic experience for the sake of aesthetic experience.<sup>1</sup> This artistic doctrine is Ruskin's "Lamp of Obedience". Every artistic medium has its limitations — poetry and music no less than painting and sculpture. The Greeks, who had a philosophical horror of the unlimited (*τὸ ἄπειρον*), practised in their art what they preached in their philosophy.

In no direction of experience can obedience ever be so completely indispensable as in the religious. What we predicate of worship

<sup>1</sup> Referring to certain sixteenth-century preachers, a historian (Hugo Arnot, *Hist. of Edin.*, 1789, p. 37) says that, "abhorring the external ceremonies of religious pomp and worship, and unfettered by all its forms", they "left unbounded scope to the imagination". This, however, is precisely what it is the proper business of art, in religion or otherwise, to avoid. Imagination that runs riot commits suicide. Through disobedience to its own nature it is swiftly transformed into fancy, as which it quickly spends itself.

is only what must be predicated of all experience directed towards God in even the least degree. It is only that the general artistic doctrine of the Lamp of Obedience is more rigorous than ever in the art of worship. For example may be cited the Russian icon, which is not regarded simply as a blessed picture, but as the place or site of a very apparition of Christ, a place where Christ may be said to be wont to appear.<sup>1</sup> In the priestly blessing of the icon, a link is believed to be formed between the icon and Christ, so that it becomes, as Saint John Damascene called it, an appointed channel of grace, and a sacramental that is nearer a sacrament than any sacramental of the Western Church. The site of devotion is thus, and in innumerable other ways, restricted. If it were merely a question of having as much aesthetic activity as possible wrung out of reality, the procedure would be very different. Our plainsong might be rewritten for part singing, and the whole liturgy re-edited in a more "brilliant" style : indeed the possibilities in this direction would be stupendous. But it is only by the limitation of the medium that the specific aesthetic ground is attained. All worship must have an element of austerity in it, not because aesthetic experience is ever redundant to religion, but because it is so vital to it that it must be manipulated in a specific manner. This is in accordance with a practice familiar to artists ; but the extent to which it is true of religion makes worship a peculiarly difficult activity for the casual onlooker to analyse with reference to its aesthetic basis. To a very superficial observer it might give the impression that aesthetic experience is somehow accidental to religion, or even superfluous. But, in fact, not only is it fundamental to worship as to all other art, but it has, as we have seen, a permanent place in the ultimate order to which religion looks forward. A healthy Church without art would be like a fit army without food.

Legitimate, and indeed necessary, as is such limitation in the life of the ordinary worshipper, it seems to dwindle rapidly in importance for those who ascend Mount Carmel. It is true that the mystics are usually exemplary in the fulfilment of any office in the Church to which they believe God has appointed them. They are scrupulously exact, as a rule, in the performance of their

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, § 66, p. 211 ff.

allotted tasks. But they often appear to attach much less significance to the specific aesthetic grounds so jealously cherished by the devout whom they leave on the plains below them. Their language often seems to support the superficial view that they disparage aesthetic experience as irrelevant to the mystic way ; but we have seen that this plainly is not so, and that the mystics reject *specific* imagery, when they take their mystical flight. They also work, however, from a larger canvas than the mass of the faithful, which helps them to see the whole question in perspective, making them less fastidious about the *kind* of aesthetic questions that generally trouble the faithful.

The function of aesthetic experience in religion, which thus grows in magnitude with every step towards the religious goal, ultimately unfolds itself, in the state of glory, as eternally fundamental. Beatified experience must be considered as experience at once enriched and simplified. The blessed enjoy complete union with God, loving him incessantly and with all the power of which they are capable. They have access to a knowledge of reality the manner of which is so direct as to be prefigured in our own shallow and halting activity in but the dimmest fashion. We have interpreted this beatific experience as consisting of two modes of activity, knowledge and will, as does the less brilliant experience we enjoy. But in this permanent and glorified state, knowledge by aesthetic experience is so complete a grasp of reality that by this activity the beatified know directly all that, as finite beings, they are capable of knowing ; and in the direction of the will to God in perfect empathetic union they have attained the summit of all the practical activity of which such beings are capable. These two modes of experience, hanging perfectly together, are distinguishable only philosophically, as moments or grades. Philosophically, we may speak of the continual mutual enrichment of one by the other. But we need hardly be reminded that the experience is one, so that the beatified may be said to see God in whom they delight for ever. The function of aesthetic experience is thus not only fundamental at every point of religion, but is permanent in the state to which all experience in religion is moving, directed to God, *motu obliquo*. For if, in that state, we so love God, the Fountain of Good, as to

have no need to exercise that abstraction of will that we call moral activity, and if, not being disembodied, we so grasp reality that logical abstraction becomes redundant, aesthetic experience and the pure love of God are, respectively, the only kinds of knowledge and will that remain meaningful.

## APPENDIX

### THE MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ART AND THE MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

It would surprise us little to find the foregoing work received by a modern psychologist with some impatient astonishment. For we have seemed to say little about the very valuable contributions of contemporary psychology to both art and religion. Our apparent neglect of modern psychology has not been due to a failure to recognize its importance in these fields.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, it is because we recognize its importance that we have kept silent about it, as a rule, believing that an adequate treatment of the problems it raises would have to be undertaken in a separate work beyond the scope of this one. Many of the problems both of art and of religion cannot be fully understood without reference to recent psychological research. It has been necessary for us, however, to restrict our treatment of the subject in hand in order to secure what we believe to be a sound basis upon which to apply the findings of the psychologists. The psychological approach has become often the most fascinating, but not always the most fruitful means of tackling certain problems in aesthetics and in religion.

<sup>1</sup> Its importance in religion, and the general importance of the idea of sub-conscious mind, was foreseen, of course, before Freud was born. We find Franz Delitzsch, for example, writing in 1855, the year before Freud's birth: "It has been a fundamental error of most psychologists hitherto, to make the soul only extend so far as its consciousness extends; it embraces, as is now always acknowledged, a far greater abundance of powers and relations than can possibly appear in its consciousness". (*A System of Biblical Theology*, p. 330.) And in 1857 Archbishop Temple was writing to his old Oxford tutor: "Our theology has been cast in a scholastic mould, i.e. all based on logic. We are in need of, and we are being gradually forced into, a theology based on psychology." (*Memoirs of Archbishop Temple*, 2, p. 517.) No-one would have recognized better than the archbishop the fact that such an aspiration needs to be qualified and explained; but it demonstrates the growing appreciation among thinkers, even in the middle of last century, of the general inadequacy of any ethic or theology that does not sufficiently consider the structure of the human mind. The age, however, was hampered by inadequate psychological knowledge; and, in these circumstances, theologians who valued the faith of the New Testament and the life of the Church were very properly suspicious of the psychological approach, which suspicions the idealistic monism of Schleiermacher's school had done nothing to allay.

Before we consider the futilities and dangers inherent in the modern psychological approach, let us look very briefly at some of the possibilities that it seems to present. For example, if the Jungian theory be true, that there are two clearly defined mental types, extrovert and introvert, we have a factor that must considerably affect the aesthetic situation, as it must also affect the nature of any mystical experience that it is possible for a man to have. It may be that such typical differences arise as a natural aid to the apprehension of reality. That is to say, it may be that the introvert looks at reality through his concave spectacles in order to correct a refraction that would otherwise interfere with his apprehension of the real, and that likewise the extrovert looks at reality through his convex spectacles to meet the exigencies of his different case. But, on the other hand, it may not be so. It may be that, as both apprehend the real imperfectly, the introvert's apprehension is subject to one kind of imperfection and the extrovert's to another. Again, if Freud's analysis of behaviour as largely sexual in origin has any truth in it at all, as we think it certainly has, then both aesthetician and theologian, taking note of Freud's clinical findings and therapeutic successes, at least must make in their judgments distinctions that may not before have seemed necessary. And even without consulting the psychoanalysts at all, the laboratory results of experimental psychology must be of immense interest to both the artistic and the devout.

Perhaps, as is usually thought, the Jungian, amongst psychoanalytic methods, is most relevant to the complicated field of religious experience. In the course of his clinical work, Jung became convinced of the inadequacy of reductive analysis by the techniques developed by Freud and Adler. He admitted that many patients responded to Freudian or Adlerian treatment; but he found that others, especially those of middle age, were quite irresponsive to it. It was through his experience with such patients that he developed his own method. Patients would come to him whose earliest memories had been unearthed, whose deepest roots had been dug up and revealed to them. The way to a "normally disillusioned life" was now open to them.<sup>1</sup> But they could not find that way. Understanding the cause of much of their trouble, they were still powerless to help themselves out of it.

The problems of a young person, Jung perceived, generally arise from some failure to achieve the most obvious goals of human existence: through neurotic hesitation he shrinks from the main tasks of human life, failing to find a satisfying vocational outlet, blundering, perhaps, in the marriage relationship, or stumbling in his effort to establish himself in the esteem of his fellows. But the middle-aged patient is confronted with

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 53.



a new and more complex problem. "Just as the youthful neurotic is afraid of life, so the older one shrinks back from death."<sup>1</sup> The cause of this is not simply fear of death, but rather that the tasks and goals of youth no longer satisfy him, and he cannot readily adapt himself to the new situation :

The significance of the morning [of life] undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind and the care of our children. . . . But . . . whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning — that is, the aims of nature — must pay for so doing with damage to his soul just as surely as a growing youth who tries to salvage his childish egoism must pay for this mistake with social failure.<sup>2</sup>

The neurosis in such cases is a direct consequence of the absence of motive and meaning in life. It is here that we find Jung drawing so close to the deeper problems of religion. He recognizes that religion has enabled people to grapple successfully with these problems of maturity, and even that the decay of religion is directly responsible for the increased number of neuroses and the frequency of "nervous breakdowns" amongst middle-aged people in our time. He goes so far as to say :

Among all my patients in the second half of life — that is to say, over thirty-five — there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that everyone of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.<sup>3</sup>

By this Jung does not mean that all his successful patients became witting adherents of any of the religions of the world, but rather that those patients who were cured always experienced a profound change in their personality and in their attitude to life.

If you sum up what people tell you about their experience, you can formulate it about in this way : they came to themselves, they could accept themselves, they were able to become reconciled to themselves and by this they were also reconciled to adverse circumstances and events. This is much like what was formerly expressed by saying : he has made his peace with God, he has sacrificed his own will, he has submitted himself to the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

Jung's insight into the deeper aspects of religion seems to have been due in no small measure to his having observed cases of violent reaction

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> *Psychology and Religion*, p. 99.

in psychological attitude amongst patients who had reached middle age. Perhaps the materialistic attitude of earlier life had broken down and the patient was turning to the only alternative he knew — the inadequate, naïve religion of his childhood. By such means he hoped to achieve a reconciliation, but in vain ; and without true and profound reconciliation the danger of neurosis or breakdown might be imminent. A neurotic type of personality frequently achieves in early life considerable success in his main aims, marriage and career, for example, but at the cost of a sharp separation of the opposing elements in his psychic constitution.

Of those who are drawn into the conflict of the problem of the opposites, not a few throw overboard everything that had previously seemed to them valuable and worth striving for, and try to live a life as opposite as possible to that of the former ego. Changes of profession, divorces, religious conversions and apostasies of every sort are the symptoms of this swinging over into one's opposite. The disadvantages of a radical conversion into the opposite is that the previous life now suffers repression. . . . This makes the tendency to deny all previous values in favour of their opposites just as pathological as the original one-sidedness.<sup>1</sup>

When, finally, we read that this reconciliation entails the attainment of the most complete development of personality of which the individual is capable, "fidelity to the law of one's own being", we must recognize that Jung, in spite of his metaphysical agnosticism, sees far into religious experience from at least one point of view.<sup>2</sup>

It does not follow, however, that we must suppose that for him religion need play little part in earlier life. With maturity, the claims of religion, and, indeed, also the claims of art, may come with new and deeper insistence. We think it would be fair to say that, implicitly, at least, Jung recognizes that an early life wholly absorbed by the more obvious biological tasks is not in fact spiritually healthy. It is just this one-sided development that gives rise to the crisis in mature age. The man who in early life has found a means of conscious dependence on

<sup>1</sup> *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, p. 78 f.

<sup>2</sup> But the point of view is a very limited one, taking no account of whether such religious experience is in fact directed towards a metaphysical goal that is real. For the psychopathologist it matters not in the least whether God exists, so long as "believing in" him has a therapeutic effect on me. This is a view parasitic on the Christian doctrine that, while faith in God is inevitable for me whether it cure or kill me, therapeutic consequences may be expected, nevertheless, as normal. The pragmatistic "faith" of such psychology is, for its purpose, probably as good as and may be better than Christian faith ; but for the purpose of Christian faith it is not good at all.

God is more likely to pass to maturity with little spiritual trouble. In some measure we might also say something like this about the man who has found his way early towards the aesthetic ground of a cultivated maturity.

We admit that there must always be a measure of neurotic immaturity in all religion. In general, and from any point of view that is relevant *here*, we may freely grant this. The sexual significance of many hymns and the neurotic craving for power in some fanatical religious attitudes, must be recognized.<sup>1</sup> We know how long and arduous is the path from the self-regarding tendency to the God-centred life. Jung sees that "what is usually and generally called 'religion' is to . . . an amazing degree a substitute",<sup>2</sup> and that the true path of spiritual growth is often greater than the individual can, at least for the present, compass. If such religion be a "substitute" in most cases, it is necessarily so. With all this, few good churchmen would seriously quarrel. Jung's agnosticism about the metaphysical is at least a reverent agnosticism.

On the other hand, it is obvious that neither aesthetician nor theologian will tolerate the attempt of any system or discipline or science, other than aesthetics and theology respectively, wholly to explain art, or religion. A wholly psychological explanation or interpretation of art or religion, like a wholly economic one, is quite legitimate from the point of view of the science that makes it; but from the point of view of art or religion it is inadmissible. Both art and religion must remain thoroughly dissatisfied with an explanation which, from their respective points of view, explains everything except the aesthetic and the religious fact. Good psychologists have generally warned against this danger; but they have generally disregarded the warnings they themselves have issued, and this sometimes almost in the same breath. In one place, for example, Jung writes: <sup>3</sup>

Only that portion of art which consists in the process of artistic form can be an object of psychology, but that which constitutes the essential nature of art must always lie outside its province. This other

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, we must also recognize that people who are vigorously attracted by religion are necessarily those whose *libido* is vigorous. It is not to be expected that they can direct it all at once to the highest religious goal. Sexual tension, for example, inevitably remains, and, if repressed, frequently produces eccentric behaviour. It is, however, no more eccentric, to say the least, than much quite pagan behaviour, which, from a sexually disinterested point of view, can be as eccentric as any.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychology and Religion*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Relation of Analytic Psychology to Poetic Art* (*B.J. Med. Psychol.* vol. 3 (1923), p. 213).

portion, namely, the problem what is art in itself, can never be the object of a psychological, but only of an aesthetico-artistic method of approach.

A similar distinction must also be made in the realm of religion ; there also a psychological consideration is permissible only in respect of the emotional and symbolical phenomena of a religion, wherein the essential nature of religion is in no way involved, as indeed it cannot be. For were this possible, not religion alone, but art also could be treated as a mere subdivision of psychology. In saying this I do not mean to affirm that such an encroachment has not actually taken place.

Certainly we should quarrel little with the general position enunciated here. But in another place the same writer says :<sup>1</sup>

To our analytical psychology, which from the human standpoint must be regarded as an empirical science, the image of God is the symbolic expression of a certain psychological state, or function. . . . Hence, for our psychology, which as a science must confine itself to the empirical within the limits set by our cognition, God is not even relative, but a function of the unconscious, namely, the manifestation of a split-off sum of libido, which has activated the *God-imago*.

This, plainly, is as unacceptable to the theologian as the corresponding attitude to art would be to the aesthetician. But in fairness to Jung, we must note the safeguarding clause preceding the last part of the second of these two well-known quotations : " Hence, for our psychology, which as a science must confine itself to the empirical within the limits set by our cognition. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Jung does emphasize repeatedly the fact that his statements about religion are those of a psychologist speaking within his own province, limited as it may be. He has met certain phenomena of the human soul in the course of his clinical experience ; and the fact that these phenomena seem to him to be identical with those described in religious literature prompts him to apply psychological terms to the description of religious facts or experiences ; but he would not claim that he was necessarily pronouncing a judgment on the ultimate nature and validity of these data.

Some confusion vitiates the discussion of psychology in its relation to religious experience. The psychologist is sure to find in his professional work some evidence of religious facts. He may dismiss these as illusory, as does Freud ; or he may be agnostic about their ultimate truth, as is Jung ; but he cannot ignore them. What is he to do ? He must

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Types* (1923), pp. 300-301.

<sup>2</sup> This clause has been neglected by some critics of the Jungian passage we quote. Dr. T. H. Hughes ignores it when he deals critically with the passage on p. 96 of *The New Psychology and Religious Experience*.

give them a place in his picture of the human soul ; and the result is that he inevitably describes religious experiences in terms of psychology. The theologian must accept the categories and vocabulary of the psychologist if he is to understand what psychology has to say about the spiritual life. Nevertheless, from a theological standpoint, the standpoint of psychology is bound to miss the mark, however reverently the psychologist gazes into the depths of religious experience.<sup>1</sup>

As the moralist must insist on the freedom of the will, the aesthetician must insist on the freedom of the aesthetic fact :

Ethics inquires how we ought to will, not how we actually do will. . . . Aesthetics is precisely analogous to ethics, except that the distinction between beauty and ugliness is substituted for that between right and wrong. Psychology . . . only inquires how things actually come to appear beautiful or ugly ; it has no concern with such questions as whether what appears beautiful really is beautiful, or how the distinction between beauty and ugliness is constituted. Perhaps what appears beautiful therefore is beautiful ; if this be so, then psychology solves the problems of aesthetics ; but it does so only by accident. It cannot show that it has solved these problems.

The last word about freedom [of the will] lies neither with psychology nor with ethics. Its full discussion involves an examination of the relation between the thought and will of the individual mind and the reality of the universe. This relation from the point of view of any finite science such as psychology is utterly inexplicable. The more closely and conscientiously we endeavour to explain it by the ordinary categories of any special science, the more plain it becomes that so regarded it is a miracle — indeed the miracle of miracles. Psychology cannot explain how it is possible that an individual can conscientiously mean or intend something.<sup>2</sup>

But while we have here a warning of the danger, from the point of view of ethics and aesthetics, of the psychological approach, we have certainly no safeguard against it. On the contrary, we have an admission that there can be, in psychology, no such safeguard. It is, in fact, the business of the conscientious psychologist to avoid one.

It is therefore plain that there is necessarily a conflict between the psychological approach to art and religion, and that of aesthetics and

<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Temple points out (in *Nature, Man and God*, p. 51), " religion refers all things to God from the outset, while Science, including Psychology, only refers to Him at all if driven to desert its own method by failure to follow it to a satisfactory issue ".

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Stout, *A Manual of Psychology* (2nd ed., 1910), Introduction, 1, 2, p. 6 ; 4, 10, 12 ; p. 634.

theology respectively. To what extent, then, are we to allow or use it, as aestheticians and theologians? We cannot ignore anything that is true from any point of view. Indeed, we ought to be eager, in the interests of art and religion, to consider and freely accept every kind of truth relevant to our field, however damaging it may seem to be to our presuppositions.<sup>1</sup> Before we answer this question, let us review some characteristic utterances of modern psychologists on art and religion.

Some of Freud's disciples have been said to be *plus royalistes que le roi*, exaggerating Freud's claims without taking into account his restrictions, or else misunderstanding what he means by his terms. This is no doubt true. But they have also tried to evade the conclusions to which he must lead. We find, for example, a modern psychoanalytical paper which admits :

The aesthetic problem does not come within the purview of the psychologist. There is the famous yet so inadequate definition : beauty is what pleases — to be set against : beauty (in our sense) is what desires to please.<sup>2</sup>

This writer, however, recognizing that the Mona Lisa would not be beautiful apart from her smile, claims that the fact that the smile plays only on the left side of the face indicates androgyny, and that women who have a Leonardesque smile reveal an active masculine component in the personality structure. This kind of feminine beauty (*beauté du diable*) is generally irresistible, he holds, to men of artistic temperament, for psychological reasons ; and (because it usually sits upon sexually frigid women, who tend, by force of circumstance, to develop a sadistic tendency) they notoriously die of thirst, like the wanderer in the desert who pursues the mirage.

But what has his master to say of the painter of the Mona Lisa? We find Freud referring all the artistic attainments and failures of Leonardo to a psychological attitude expressed under the phantasy of a vulture brushing the infant lips of the future painter with its tail, as he lay in his cradle.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we are informed that his "specific talent" was "prob-

<sup>1</sup> We need hardly say that this is widely recognized by all good theologians and aestheticians. In the field of religion, for example, one need only be reminded of such works as Canon Grensted's *Psychology and God*, and of numerous valuable articles, such as that by W. E. Hocking on "The Meaning of Mysticism as seen through its Psychology" (*Mind*, 1912, p. 38 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Wittels, "Mona Lisa and Feminine Beauty" (*Internat. J. of Psychoanalysis*, 1934), 15, pp. 25-40.

<sup>3</sup> S. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci* (tr. Brill, 1916), p. 129 : "It seems as if the key to all his attainments and failures was hidden in the childhood phantasy of the vulture". Yet even Freud says (*op. cit.* p. 128) that "the nature of artistic attainment is psychoanalytically inaccessible to us".

ably enforced by the early awakening of the impulse of looking", by which means his early sexual impulses, being aroused, were sublimated. However we are to interpret "sex" in Freudian usage, and it has been often grossly misinterpreted, we cannot admit such determinism, which tends, to say the least, to the denial of freedom, not only of the will, but of knowledge. It is not enough to receive the admission, however welcome, that

It . . . seems to me unlikely that the psychological approach can ever bring us very close to the chief determinants of esthetic value ; that what it tells us about the demands made on artist and recipient can ever be translated into explanations of esthetic valuation.<sup>1</sup>

It must be made plain that it is not only the freedom of aesthetic activity, or the freedom of the will, that is in peril. For equally endangered is the freedom of thought. We have no assurance from the modern psychologist's science that the logical coherence upon which, like every science, it wholly depends for its validity, is not in itself a vast hallucination also determined from below, by some Oedipus or other complex in the subconscious. Freud has shown the large part played by rationalization (in his technical sense) in human affairs. We have no guarantee, and in the nature of modern psychology we can have no guarantee, that psychoanalysis itself is not ultimately a rationalization ; for from this point of view there is no reason to suppose that we can know more freely than we can will. We, on the other hand, defending four freedoms — freedom of aesthetic activity, freedom of intellectual activity, freedom of "economic" activity, and freedom of moral activity — contend for a psychology, not yet born, that would do justice to the higher aspects of the life of the *psyche*, as modern psychology has so far certainly failed to do.<sup>2</sup>

But we may be, and ought to be, and are, generously informed by the psychologists of the present day, who can, by their special techniques,

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Whitmore, "The Psychological Approach to Esthetics" (*Amer. J. of Psychology*, 1927), 38, pp. 21-38 ; at p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> It may be that a development of the *Verstehende Psychologie* may help to provide this. See H. A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey* (Kegan Paul, 1944, c. 3, pp. 49-51). Dilthey erases the distinction between intellect and reality. He draws a clear line between the *Naturwissenschaften*, which have to describe and conceptualize (*begreifen*), and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which have to understand ends and values (*verstehen*). Psychoanalysis, Gestalt, and all other "natural science" psychologies, while contributing very valuable information, fail to tell us what we most want to know about the *psyche* ; and Dilthey postulates the need of an analytic and descriptive psychology concerned with a systematic knowledge of the nature of consciousness and of the inner unity (*Strukturzusammenhang*) of individuals and social life.

show us that a work that passes for art or a life that passes for religion may not be, in fact, artistic or religious at all. The truly artistic and the truly devout are as anxious to eliminate false art and false gods, respectively, as the scientific are anxious to eliminate false reasoning. If a psychoanalyst can convince an artist that what he took to be aesthetic intuition was merely the result of a little neurotic disturbance, the true artist will be grateful to have his delusion discovered, because the discovery is likely to enable him to exercise his aesthetic activity more freely at a point at which it was being inhibited ; and so, likewise, will the truly devout.

On the other hand, much of what modern psychology is in the habit of saying about art and religion is not informative to aesthetics or theology. Merely to be aware of a connection between the sex or any other primary complex and either art or religion is in itself no more illuminating than to be aware of a connection between art and life, or between life and religion. Professor Leuba compares the effects of narcotics with the states claimed by theology to be mystical. He remarks that they have in common "incomparable sensuous delights, and an impression of limitless power and freedom" ; and contends that the term "divine" simply acquires its meaning from the context in which it is applied.<sup>1</sup> This may indeed be so ; but it tells us very little. A drunk man usually thinks he is being witty when in fact he is only making a fool of himself ; but thinking oneself a wit is not being witty. A sober man makes the necessary distinction. It is to be expected that both mystics and erotomaniacs should call the object of their attention "God". It may even be that in the experience of a great mystic there may be erotomania at some point, just as a notably moral person may be amoral in some respects, and the most careful scholar at some point inaccurate. We all have blind spots. But mysticism, morality, and scholarship still mean what they meant before. Anyone who thinks that sex plays no part in what passes for art and religion may be assured that at least part of what he calls art and religion is something much less ; but if, on the other hand, anyone thinks it even partly accounts for all art and religion, then all that he knows as art and religion is, we maintain, also something much less.<sup>2</sup> Fetichism in the subconscious

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (Kegan Paul, 1925), p. 36. (This is, indeed, the general argument of the whole book.)

<sup>2</sup> Of course, not all psychoanalysts give sex such wide powers of determination. Adler, for instance, stresses the ego complex, or "will to power" ; and McDougall recognizes many primary instincts. But so long as any of the "freedoms" for which we contend are vitiated, the situation, from our point of view, is no more acceptable. Even Leuba repudiates the view that sex wholly accounts for religion, but only because sex is *not the only need* of mankind, although "with food and self-affirmation, man's chief concern" (*op. cit.* p. 137).



of a scientist may be a factor in the discovery of a medically valuable drug; but it does not in the least affect the validity of the scientist's experiments or results. The *origin* of activity, aesthetic, intellectual, or moral, is no criterion of its *value*. Likewise, even that "faith" that the schoolboy defined as "the power whereby I steadfastly believe that which I know to be untrue" may be in some sense and in some circumstances a factor in the process leading to Christian faith, although Christian faith is certainly very different. But this is almost like saying that drinking is a factor in the act of becoming sober.

While, however, we can learn little from the psychologists on the most profound issues either in art or in religion we can certainly say that on lesser, yet intricate, problems in aesthetics and theology, they can give us invaluable assistance. This is particularly true of experimental psychology. Many papers could be quoted to show the value to aesthetics, for example, of such research. One experimenter has demonstrated that familiarization influences aesthetic judgment, but that the effect is easily lost in the course of time.<sup>1</sup> Another showed how the appreciation of an aesthetic object is enhanced by apparent participation in its activity.<sup>2</sup> Yet another found, on experiment, that

The art object always has a moving effect. It appeals, as William James would say, to the bodily sounding board. It calls out some response of the affective kind which the psychologist would label emotion, feeling, or mood. . . .

The aesthetic experience, then, does not, can not occur except upon a background of these bodily and visceral responses, and they seem to give it poignancy, importance, brilliance, emphasis. They are usually in the nature of widespread and unlocalized responses. . . . [Aesthetic experience supposes] an attentive state, with the musculature and all the senses alert and active, following every detail of the stimulus and making the experiencing of it a forceful and vivid awareness.<sup>3</sup>

This writer found that aesthetic experience is usually, but not necessarily, affectively toned, and is, psychologically considered, a blend of many processes, automatic and voluntary. It involves attention and tension, a sense of mastery over difficulty. There is never a genuine emotion in it, but only an emotional tone.

No aesthetician can find such results of experimental psychology un-

<sup>1</sup> S. Pan, "A Study in Esthetic Judgment; the Influence of Familiarity" (*N.C.J. Psychol. nat. cent. Univ.* (1934), 1, No. 2).

<sup>2</sup> Kate Gordon, "A Device for Demonstrating Empathy" (*J. of Exper. Psychol.* (1934), 17, p. 892).

<sup>3</sup> Kate Hevner, "The Aesthetic Experience: a Psychological Description" (*Psychol. Review* (1937), 44, pp. 245-263; at pp. 256-257).

interesting. The laboratory conditions must be considered, of course, in evaluating them ; but we are assured by one writer that, although such study of aesthetics may depend on the subject's introspective report, a prolonged experiment ensures that his responses to the question, "Is this pleasing or displeasing ?" becomes less a report of his feeling and more a "judgment".<sup>1</sup> It seems that this means the subject does not merely record his feelings (as if answering the question, "Does this object produce in you pleasant or unpleasant feeling ?") but that he makes a rational assertion that the object is pleasing or displeasing in itself. This presupposes physical beauty in the sense in which, with Croce, we deny it ; but it illustrates well enough the possibilities of the experimental method. We may often, indeed, extricate from the findings of psychologists who are apparently most hostile to religion much useful information about it. A paper on the neuroses of enforced chastity, for instance, purports to show that mysticism is simply a sublimation of unsatisfied sex energy.<sup>2</sup> This certainly would not satisfy us as a complete explanation of what we mean by mysticism. But the empirical fact which the author alleges, as a result of scientific observation, that mystical experience occurs primarily in chaste persons, much interests us. He might have told us that he had found it to occur rather in licentious persons whose *libido* force of circumstances had temporarily inhibited. But no : he finds it in conspicuously chaste persons. As Catholic theologians, it is what we should expect to find ; and of course we are glad to know that experimental psychology finds it. The point might have presented us with a problem. As it is, here is at least one point on which there is, for us, no problem.

A psychological study of artists and mystics, if good enough, can help us to understand not only them, but art and mysticism, better than we could otherwise do. In Flournoy's study of "Mlle. Vé"<sup>3</sup> (his pseudonym for a Swiss Protestant lady), we read that when she began to enjoy mystical experience of some kind, she found that the traditional elements in her religion had been "limited".

Elle a inauguré en moi une nouvelle conception du divin, à laquelle je ne suis pas arrivée d'un bond, mais qui me semble maintenant avoir consisté à dégager l'idée de Dieu de toute entrave dogmatique, de toute formule immuable. Avant cela, j'avais de Dieu une idée toujours la même (*cut and dried*, comme disent les Anglais) ; et je sens bien, maintenant, combien limitée, étriquée, était cette conception.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. S. Woodworth, *Experimental Psychology* (Methuen, 1939), c. 16 (Experimental Esthetics), pp. 368-391.

<sup>2</sup> R. Kehl, "As nevroses dos 'forcados da castidade'" (*Arch. Braz. Hyg. Ment.* (1934), 7, pp. 104-110).

<sup>3</sup> "Une Mystique moderne" (*Archives de Psychologie*, 1915).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 47.

Of course even the best theology must be *limité* and *étriqué* in comparison with any kind of mystical experience that is genuine, however thin, just as the best biology, the science of life, must be extremely *limité* and *étriqué* in comparison with even the most superficial experience of life itself. Nor, in an appendix to a work that has insisted as much as ours on the necessity for right theology as a basis for genuine mystical experience, need we point to the danger in such an attitude. Our point is that only a psychological approach could give us this *kind* of knowledge of the nature of mystical experience.

The main purpose of this appendix has been to show, in the defence of our "four freedoms", the minimum for which we must stand as aestheticians and theologians against the infringements of the modern psychological approach, and to hint at the vast assistance that this approach can give us when we assign to it such a limit. We saw in our work how much that passes for religion is mere conventionality;<sup>1</sup> but it does not on that account wholly cease to interest us. It is, as we saw, a derivative perversion of a once living spiritual activity. Conventionality in art is in much the same case. What goes on after the atrophy has occurred does interest the aesthetician and the theologian very much, not because a point might conceivably be reached when the psychological approach would fully explain all such atrophied art and all such atrophied religion, but because it is the business of the artistic and the devout to arrest such a situation, and an analysis of it is plainly helpful to them.

There remains one practical question. How, *in practice*, is an aesthetician or a theologian who is also in some measure a psychologist to apply the psychological approach conscientiously while at the same time standing guard on the precincts of his own field against the psychologist's trespass? Here the observations of a medical man expressing his clinical point of view may help us:<sup>2</sup>

In any attempt to deal with misconduct in mental defectives, it is necessary to hold the mutually contradictory doctrines of psychic determinism and "free will" at one and the same time! Tolerance born of the belief that the patient is not responsible for his actions is essential, while at the same time one must exhort him to try to improve.

In a mental clinic one is to act as if one were a "psychic determinist", although in fact one recognizes the freedom of the will. This is not, indeed, a remarkable or unusual feat. Not only must the chemist in his laboratory and the surgeon in his operating theatre, although they may

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, c. 5, § 46, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. F. E. E. Scheider, "Conduct Disorder in Mental Defectives", in *A Survey of Child Psychiatry* (O.U.P., 1939), p. 135.

be good and informed churchmen, act as if they were determinists, but the priest, both as preacher and pastor, must sometimes speak and act as if he were, for example, a Pelagian. Let the Calvinist preacher provide an illustration of this point. In spite of his theological belief in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, he also believes in an ordained ministry whose duty it is by the appointed means of grace both to convert the sinner to the Church and nourish him thereafter. He holds that the divine purpose is fulfilled by a ministry charged with the duty of administering the Sacraments and preaching the Word. Now, it is in fact psychologically impossible for him to fulfil this duty properly if throughout his sermons the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination be vividly before his mind. On the contrary, he must act as if he were on this point unsound by Calvin's standards. In this he is blameless. We have seen that even the Catholic mystics have often been misunderstood because, although impeccably orthodox, they had sometimes to talk and act almost like pantheists.

This paradoxical situation is one that arises out of the natural limitation of the human mind, a limitation peculiarly well known to the theist, for on the genuinely profound acceptance of it the genuineness of the theistic profession much depends. It is good that we should recognize how little we can arrange our everyday thought in full conformity with any metaphysical attitude, avowedly religious or otherwise. Sometimes we must act as if we had "taken leave of our senses", that is, as if we had shelved rational thought, as when, suddenly confronted by great danger, we take too great a risk. But this does not mean that we have in fact repudiated the validity of reason; for we have but temporarily accommodated the eternal truth of reason to a limitation inherent in the structure of the human mind, which cannot always hold everything well in place. The gibe that the phenomenalist with toothache tends to forsake his phenomenism is in itself no valid reproach against such an epistemology. Nevertheless, it is part of the function of religion not only to recognize the limitation but to bring our metaphysical thinking and our everyday life into true perspective. Apart from the truth or falsehood of the metaphysical propositions underlying its theology, a religion might justly be reproached if it could offer to its votaries no help at all in relating their life to their metaphysical attitude. Modern psychology has much to tell us about life. We may fully use, and ought to use, its approach to both art and religion, while rejoicing that the Word has been made flesh, to dwell among us.

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